

*POETRY*  
*A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*  
*VOLUME LXIII*





# Poetry

*A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

FOUNDED IN 1912 BY  
HARRIET MONROE



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# ERRATA :

Page 21, line 6: Dash at end of line should be a hyphen.

The poem *Key West*, by Harold Norse, was divided by the author into five sections by means of asterisks, which were omitted by the printer. The asterisks should occur after the following lines: line 18 on page 80, line 9 on page 82, line 3 on page 83, and line 1 on page 84.

Page 82, line 18: For *finding* read *find*.

Page 89, line 17: insert the letters *ing* at the beginning of the line.

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To have great poets  
there must be great audiences too.

WHITMAN

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# P O E T R Y

## *A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

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### SIX POEMS

#### A GAME OF CHANCE

DEATH, the friend behind phenomenon,  
Coughs up his flowers in a gay pastiche,  
Distributes favors to the party guests  
And makes an all-inclusive speech.

He is that skier whom the winter snow  
Bleeds for; his eminence of height  
Is heaven-wise, tricking his foe  
Before the owls and the night.

His tinkle hides behind the bark of trees  
When the lottery of leaves is ill-begun;  
He sighs the dangerous whisper at the frieze  
Of fountains tipping in the summer sun.

Death is that slipshod saviour early come  
To dereliction and the drowned dream;  
And you will bow beneath his skillful thumb,  
The legendary victim of his fame.

He claws to heaven with a corkscrew sound,  
A hawk-foot-screamer swooping for the dead;  
Death is your lover and your body bends  
To meet his dark, possessive head.

#### RIDER, RIDER

He did not hammer on the glass pane  
Against instructions; nor at the airport  
Did he betray by any gaucherie  
The guilty traveler's nostalgia.

But always circumspect with a correct smile,  
Fingered the proper schedule; in time  
He was not overly surprised by rain,  
Though there were rumors and an old ill.

He did not suppose the city would linger  
Long beneath the marvelous propeller  
But there were accidents ten years before,  
Blood on the stairs if he chose to remember.

What is one world that he should sit transfixed,  
Cut clean by wing's immaculate precision?  
What trace of home cuts cleaner still  
And leaves him live in air, and speechless there?

How could he know that no one city gives  
The perfect answer to the crooked ear?  
Longing, he looks and sees, beneath the flare,  
The lucid tragedy of local fear.

No road for him but the old tangle,  
No landscape clean but the darkest wood  
Where suddenly he sees corroded earth  
And far beneath, his blood, his own blood.

Downward he falls, compulsive to the glare  
Of searchlight's trumpeted career;  
Falling he fears the death of every want,  
The cautious symbols of his own descent.

The secret sparrows in his folded hands  
But is lost, lost in the landing here;  
There is nothing but darkness and going home  
And the small gossip of a ruin.

#### THE SHORE REMEMBERED

Let the crumpled body of that swimmer  
Be indicator; that vivid hanging  
In the sea, whose once trim wrist was time,  
Now lies a pleasurable man of summer  
Where the waves' green eyes break for wanting  
His body as prize, his lips for salt and lime.

There are many deaths, shockingly inappropriate:  
The young child whose brittle mind was once



Accustomed to the world; he could not foretell  
What innocence confounds the sea: for this no opiate,  
No predatory wish, no magic lance  
But the darkling single diver finding hell.

Is it because some rode quietly through evening  
Neglecting the uncomfortable beggar  
Who knows the shape of evening as anonymous,  
That this, this death, this sudden rendering  
Intrigues eternity to smaller frame, and yet is bigger  
Than the daily tragedy residing at your house?

Is it because so much of evil is private,  
The almost illicit friendship, the inability  
To say—this is the violence that precedes decay?  
To finger precisely the wound or covet  
Wholly the lover whose insular security  
Was probed, so painfully, day to day?

It is perhaps the reaping of misuse  
When sandals cling their music to the foot  
And beach umbrellas in the sun contrive for war:  
The dark decisiveness of summer is the root.  
We know that shore which once was certainty,  
And we will never find what we were looking for.

#### A LOVE POEM

Parting, the heart flies<sup>s</sup>  
Spick and span, away.

Hammering with malice  
Its antique memories,  
Corrupt in the chest  
It yearns and cannot die.

Wedded to despair,  
Apt for yes and no,  
Wanting the tropics  
Wanting the snow,  
At once, authentic,  
At once, incognito.

How shall it leave,  
Arriving too,  
Deformity of love?  
And think of you  
And think of death  
Since either with  
Or without you, death  
Is other side of love.

But always nostrils catch  
The acrid smell of hate  
Which harbors death;  
Lecher and celibate  
Know this well, but often smell  
The ice cube of a Polar breath.

To see you go  
Suddenly away

There is no Paradise  
Today, today,  
I say this to you  
Once scepter and king,  
Diminishing, diminishing.

#### THE FOX HUNT

One thinks the fox hunt is enameled there  
Climbing forever the reckless hill;  
The antique horses are but miniature  
And no throat tightens for the old halloo.  
Pursuit by no convention is outweighed,  
The chase remains; the fox has long since died.

Hurry of trees, hurrah! The hunter  
Settles in the leaves' myopic fringe;  
Thinks only of decoy and denouement,  
A punctuation is his single want.  
Though his necessity is sunlight's trip  
No day ensues flamingo to the tip.

What had he come for, stealing through  
The rocky landscape with his gun unhinged  
For rabbit, fox, and caribou,  
A risky spy for his candid prey?  
You have seen him waiting by the waterfall  
In snow, a murderer of fowl.

And what is white may soon be red. Is this,  
I cried, a symptom of our peace?  
Is this hallucination of the war,  
First fathomed by recess of dangerous  
Pursuit in woods, a mere hysteria?  
My voice untrumpeted the hills  
As distance doubled in the wind's decrease.

Love was the fox. I named him at last.  
Running the circuit of my own deceit,  
Through grass I have seen him trembling there,  
Myself too hazardous, my legs too fleet.  
There is no exit from the hopeless wood  
And here, the final word is said.

By such persuasion is the mind undone  
That peace is but a further stimulant,  
A fire follows and a sea pursues  
And after that, there is no name for peace.  
And happiness is a false prediction  
Like love rehearsed in the imagination.

#### THE TWENTY-FIRST SUMMER

Near relatives are weaving, porch to porch,  
The tardy wreckage of a thousand lives.  
Mind reaches on this suicidal terrace  
The bankrupt enmity of friend for friend  
Whose shadows knelt on the encroaching sand.

What twist to body twisted there  
Is gone; and then it held perfection;  
It was the shore worlds broke upon  
Before, before—but now the air  
Mirrors the deadly face of one

Whose big, remembered head once shot  
Through seas to tell the summer's tune,  
Turning up always in a dream,—  
Is gone. Because the gulls are here  
I think the weather is the air.

Like Bedouins we crept into the house  
Where records and the cigarettes  
Seemed more oasis to our lives  
Than sand that lived upon the stairs;  
Ours, the absurd security of jazz.

Remorseless change unlocks the hands  
That clasped a moment, apart they stay  
Each in the orbit of one self;  
Unnatural vice, they say,  
Was fathered in this paradise.

But we, certainly innocent,  
Remember walks in a green land,  
The backlog of suburban rides,  
The boats anchored in sand;  
The salty rummaging of tides.

But even this seems gauche and young  
Remembered; and the tongue  
Lies for a kiss the heart gives up  
And finally success becomes  
The grimace on the family lip.

Scenes change, the trains not fast enough;  
The colleges repeat a thousand errors  
And falsify the final blood  
That knows in the essential weakness  
Is found the landscape and the love.

Who can recall the first false glance  
One night imperceptibly cooler;  
Or measure awkwardness of stance  
On the heart's imperfect ruler?  
Memory's end will not commence.

We did not know the curtains hid  
The sugar skull of summer  
But thought that we had melted it  
Into a perfect swimmer  
Whose luck was simply what he did.

But like the cat in the butcher store,  
So near the center of horror,  
Who fondles on his safest fringe  
The trap-door of his error,  
We too moved toward its center.

For we are left with two such images  
The mind repeats and cannot choose  
The childhood fragrance of the piano  
Or death successful on the plaza  
And both may be chimeras.

At least we know one thing to hold  
Against the smirk of shameless elders:  
That their contagion was enough;  
Disease of which the symptom is  
Control of memory through self-love.

Perhaps we cannot ever reach  
A rhetoric which is not speech;  
And murmur still because, because—  
Words there are none to speak, no words  
But the always fatal mixture of two worlds.

*Howard Moss*

## THIS ANIMAL

It must have been a shy thing walking here:  
The secret stepping herd, warm-flanked together,  
Could not impress this shifting floor with tracks  
Enough to long outlast our meager weather.

It bore a high and fragile head, too light  
To leave the branches long like antlers bent,  
But where it walked it planted cloven hearts  
Pointing the ever upward way it went.

These leather feet of a later, louder hour,  
Though blundering until darkness takes the trace,  
Will never stand above bound, patrician hooves,  
The glazing, compassionate eyes or the stiffening grace.

We are betrayed by the kindred flesh we ate  
And the animal skins, yet bloody, that we wore,  
And the sound of twigs like unsuspecting bones  
Cracked out for bread behind the forest door.

Go down then where the iron-sheltered fear  
Nudges the dark and ever windless hollow,  
Remembering on what green, inviolate hill  
We learned the bitter wisdom not to follow.

*Charlie Masters*



TO AN OLD TENOR

Melfort Dalton, I knew you well  
With your frozen eyes and your spastic stance.  
Ah, but your voice was clear as a bell  
When you tenored the ladies into a trance;  
The finest tenor in town you were,  
Finest; but those were the days of yore,  
Oh, but weren't you arrogant then,  
Weren't you arrogant, Chanticleer,  
When you told each hostess to go to hell:  
"I'll sing what I like and I'll read the score"?  
Little they knew; but I knew what you meant:  
Yourself you first had to magnify  
Before your notes unto Heaven were sent—  
(Peacocks and tenors and G.P.I.)  
I knew it, and that is the reason why  
I now am recording the wonderful tale  
Of how you received an offer to come,  
Though your eyes and your legs were beginning to fail,  
And sing at St. Joseph's Old Maids' Home,  
And all the honors you gained therefrom.

We sat in the nearest respectable bar  
Waiting the message of how you fared;  
And, though we wished it, we were not for  
Success overwhelming quite prepared.  
Sitting we waited and tiddled the ale;  
In came the scout with the wonderful word  
Of how they tittered and how you scored:

"Called back four times." And we roared, "Waes-hael!  
Melfort has done it again, good Lord!"  
We were not allowed in the Old Maids' Home;  
And rightly so, for they might be scared;  
But "Here, boy, here. Tell us all How Come?"  
"He shuffled at first then he came to a stand.  
He did not bow as a fav'rite should  
(He knew that his balance was none too good)  
But he stared with a visage inane and bland."  
"But how did he merit such great applause?  
Be more explicit, you poor recorder?"  
"Once for singing, and thrice because  
His dress revealed a quaint disorder."

Moral  
(*Non Nobis*)

A moral lies in this occurrence:  
Let those who have too much assurance  
And think that public approbation  
That comes from songs or an oration  
Is due but to their own desert,  
Remember Melfort Dalton's shirt.

*Oliver St. John Gogarty*

PERIOD PIECE

(OR THOUGHTS ON TURNING OUT OF 57TH STREET)

I

Who goes there? Who is it now,  
Who's lost among the ambiguities?—  
Isodorus of Aegae, is it you, peeping from  
The Eleusinian Mysteries?  
(The poverty of flesh, imprisoned,  
Cries out to be let loose and free;  
The richness of the mind, impassioned,  
Prosperes aloof in sad, lone secrecy.)  
And there among great shadows gathering,  
Who is it now that turns and turns away?  
The lovely locomotive spews its smoke  
And The Lady, pink with languor, sniffs her prey.  
The parterre and proscenium lights  
Shudder and fade down upon the crowd;  
The curtains gather and swing wide again  
While fashion whispers stupidly out loud.  
Cicadas whirl about the caryatids  
Whining staccato-sweet their drone of doom—  
While Nostradamus, stretched upon the rack,  
Whistles in the gloom.

II

See the white horses, Antoine-coiffed,  
Playing at skittles with these shells!

And the pale warrior, Thetis-draped,  
 Quaking at the sound of bells!  
 Anacreon, Apollo and a plastic swan  
 Sway gently on the boughs of a mobile;  
 Three Critics and The Coming One  
 Posture prettily on a catherine-wheel.  
 Hell holds no fear for such as these and those  
 Who glamourize the ghosts of ghouls:  
 It is a marvelous prospect, sirs; behold  
 This paradise of fools:  
 This visceral ballet of basilisks  
 Thrust out on wooden arms from concave walls,—  
 These gamey gaieties of witless flesh  
 That vie with eggs thrown in old music halls.  
 Half-buried in the sand the fluted torso  
 Is flirting outrageously with the sun—  
 While embryos, pondering the chthonic mneme,  
 Drunk, in little circles run.  
 Sarcophagi and ruined viaducts  
 Crumble and stretch into a nether world  
 Where melting watches, telephones and chairs  
 Are tossed in trees and by the mistral whirled!  
 Palladio and Thalia at The Gate  
 Beckon becomingly to the tortured few  
 Who, frozen to the threshold, fain would flee  
 Back to the womb for one last foetus-view.  
 Beyond The Gate in dusty corners cringe  
 Old dialectic Dadaists,  
 Green with envy, but with gossip cheered,  
 Heralding the fall of the *Surréalistes*.

Max Ernst and Dali and Miss Sitwell sit  
Uncomfortably against a frieze;  
Hieronymous Bosch and Gertrude Stein  
Serve tea to skeletons hung with bees . . .

III

In Fontainebleau the salamanders smirk,  
In Carmel stallions bleat—  
The air is filled with *bombes-glacées*  
And the wind is bittersweet.  
In Frisco and da Cunha's Isle,  
In Cathay and K. C.,  
The art of Arp and Mondrian  
Supplants Chinoiserie.  
In Harlem all the boys are blue  
And the yellow girls are gone,  
The Countess's tattoos are fake  
And the angels do not spawn.  
In Chelsea, Woodstock, Montparnasse,  
In Worpswede and Tuscan towns,  
The streets are strewn with dead bluestockings  
And the graves are decked with clowns . . .  
The moon is barking at a dog, for once,  
And Brancusi's Bird in Space  
Shivers with the dead-eyed stars  
And, mole-like, hides her face.  
The hagiographies of *chic* and *schön*  
Commingle amiably with blood,  
Freshening, no doubt, the bones and flesh

Of unicorns at stud,—  
Of feathered androgynes on stilts  
And griffons masqued in myrrh,  
Of men whose lips are aubergine  
And girls whose breasts are fur . . .  
The tigers stare from Rousseau's *Dream*,  
The Nude descends—and all is well,  
Except for the echoing of the silent night  
Seeming to say: farewell, farewell—  
Except for the drumming of the dreadful dawn  
Foretelling of no future in its fate—  
Except for the whispering at the heart  
Saying: too late, too late. . .

*Robert Hunt*

FOUR POEMS

NIGHT COMES TO BEAR MOUNTAIN

I

Past the moonlight and the moon  
Past the rigid stricken rails  
Past the bridge of ladder lights  
The width of river waters.

Step along the slender dune  
Crash across rime plated shales  
Evening holds in ebonite  
The forms of pines in clusters.

II

This is where black gulls come home to roost.  
They have flown the wind, have found the lee,  
Swallowed the air, the sweepings of the sea  
And closed on shore. On pine and on spruce  
They sit, on stones, on piles of driftwood  
And on jutting rock. They are the drones  
That watch the water from dark thrones  
With proud beaks pointing their dark likelihood.

Now they are home. Home! Is it to die,  
To be borne down by gradual tethers,  
Their cold breaths dropping like worn feathers,  
Their clamor fainting as lungs grow dry?

How can they die? As a straggly tree  
On a rocky perch, the bird, recast,  
Digs into earth and finds roots at last,  
Its brown claws gripping eternity.

#### SOCRATIC

Where is courage? In the will?  
In the wish lying still?  
Is it pushed or is its part  
The unhesitating heart?

Where is wisdom? In the past?  
Poured into a future cast?  
Is it waiting on the sill  
Or is its manner volatile?

Who will find them? Who will know  
If they sting or if they glow?  
Could they ripen, like a peach,  
In my yard, within my reach?

#### RENDEZVOUS

On landscape laid in platinum,  
Day gone, night yet to come,  
The branches twine a stiff black lace  
Above our meeting place.

Stay with me. In the meadow soon  
The mist will grow a moon



And on its white leaf we will lay  
The last pale drop of day.

TALKERS

They champion words to spear  
The armor of the brain,  
Depend upon the ear  
To make a meaning plain.

But words are hoops. They wheel  
Before the eye, the heart,  
Along the nerves, reveal  
New meanings for each part.

A gesture is direct  
As hands outstretched with bread.  
The wary intellect  
Will watch for the unsaid.

*Ruth Stephan*

## SEA FLOOR

The eyes see (turning inward yet once more)  
The mind like a sea floor.  
To the first slope clings love, and overhead  
Waves that seem monstrous roar  
And crash, and run, and to the stunned depths are sped.

In journeying gloom beside, postured or slow—  
Twisting, stands all we know.  
Light filters through the weeds green and opaque;  
What figures come and go  
Are blotted over depths light may not undertake.

There, puddled in darkness, grow thick forms  
In close and stretching swarms—  
The things we love and dare not know we love.  
They are not touched by storms.  
They change little. No light comes in above.

And down through all a blind, unseating swell  
Rolls like a silent bell.  
Black, heavy, cold—at last nothing is there  
Save deep in that deep well  
The crushed and objectless surging of despair.

*Edward Weismiller*

LEEUWENHOEK

Leeuwenhoek  
Bore no spite  
Against the speck,  
The mote, the mite.

Buffing, grinding,  
Making true,  
The fact-finding  
Tools he knew,

Only wonder,  
Sharp as pain,  
Clear as thunder  
Before rain,

Stirred his senses,  
When his eyes  
Through his lenses  
Held surprise.

In his prism  
The first found  
Microcosm  
Held him bound.

In his fusing  
Pipes and tubes,  
He sat, musing  
On strange feuds:

First to vision,  
First to probe  
And imprison  
The microbe.

Sighting, testing,  
To explore,  
Patient, questing,  
Cell and spore;

Searcher, peerer,  
Tirelessly,  
To bring nearer  
Mystery.

He looked, eager,  
In a glass  
At the meager  
Amoebas.

He dripped water  
On a slide  
And saw slaughter  
As he spied.

The first finder  
In commerce  
With a blinder  
Universe.

*Alex R. Schmidt*

THREE PROBLEMS

TIME AND ETERNITY

The boat, the punctual steamer—  
My great-grandfather,  
Then retired,  
Once the captain of her—  
Came reliably at four.

My cousin and I for the punctual steamer—  
Of my mother's father's father  
Now dead—  
Sighting signal smoke across the water  
Waited anxiously on shore,

Rotted and sinking, no longer the steamer  
Comes at four.  
Who has heard  
Of my cousin who, swimming the fabulous water,  
Has not returned to shore?

The plane, the punctual roar  
Over the house of my friend  
Still living  
Safe on the gardened shore,  
Comes reliably at five.

My friend and I, by the punctual plane  
Setting our watches, stand  
Still breathing.

Garden, house, and sun survive  
Reliably tonight at five.

Four, five, six; and darkness near  
The settling steamer, the caroming plane  
Mutual death dealing.  
Let who may see or hear refrain  
Counting the minutes lest he should connive  
With the coming downward and darkness. Here  
The steamer's punctual siren, the plane's roar,  
Ancestral, fabulous, may still arrive.

#### QUESTIONS CONCERNING MADNESS

And the mad women said, "Tell us our names."  
What shall we tell the mad,  
The living dead?

I am glad for the mind's turning.  
I am most afraid of, most in love with  
Eyes  
And in the eyes the hands of the mind turning.

Do not call this turning by such names  
As tools, instruments, and all that turn with  
Wheels.  
You will mistake the eyes, misprizing names.

These are organic, warm, by brain and heart  
Dual-controlled to tempt, to love, to teach with,

Hands which eyes report  
Of the brain and the flexible heart.

I am not afraid of the eyes dying,  
Having a mind and heart enough to die with.  
I am afraid  
Of hands, taut with madness, hands that speak  
When the mind dies.

Maniac fingers loved are now turning  
The wheel of a question, hands that trace  
The traceless chaos, turning  
Unrecognizable the known face,  
The dead hands  
In the living eyes.

Tell me the land they live in and their names.

FRIGHT

When buffalo, the mighty-maned, had fled,  
A single horseman rode the timid herd.  
But where shall I lay down my head?  
Below and in a crowded bed? \*

When we, the mighty-limbed, in witless fright  
Stampede before the single airman's freight,  
Steel the barracks and the bed.  
A loaned coat will hide the head.

No buffalo of course preferred appeal

For mercy to the man with rope and reins.  
Shall I retire content to barracked steel?  
Shall I be messmate with the rats in drains?  
Another I prepares a bed  
With headless airmen hard beside.

*Jeremy Ingalls*

### THE SEEKING

The soldier cannot make his cause  
A righteous one;  
If this be done, it must  
Be elsewhere done.  
There lies no longer in his power  
The questioned creed;  
The day, imperative, requires  
Only the deed  
By some on unimperilled soil  
Must then be sought  
To prove the gage's worth, lest wars  
Be purblind fought.  
On these who yet have seen no blood  
The burden lies;  
Thus do the ignorant  
Become most wise.

*Marie Borroff*



SEVEN POEMS

SUMMER

A soft rain every other day,  
Green grass grows fast and long;  
Fat frogs have so much to say,  
I'm sure that something has gone wrong.

So much rain has come in June,  
Winds are so long and gently blown,  
This warm wet weather will end soon:  
August will be as dry as a bone.

Summer has a double task,  
It must give birth and stay till death;  
Only a fool would dare to ask  
Mercy of her uneasy breath.

THE FANCIFUL ENGRAVURE OF THE SKY

The fanciful engravure of the sky  
Engenders much inebriate thought.  
The pig may from his muddy sty  
See all the wonder night has wrought,

But that does not distract him from the trough.  
A pail of swill has more immediate meaning  
Than stars that on mysterious errand wander off,  
Where snout can never snuffle at their gleaming.

#### THE REEF

Strange as the world turns out, the mind can still  
Find billowy refuge in belief,  
Say like a captain: Do not sound the reef,  
Skim over Reason's shallow bay until  
Deeper and darker seas are won, that leaden plumb  
Can never fathom, where tempests blow  
From hidden lands map makers do not know,  
That speak in voices that make doubting dumb.

#### THE WORM HAS HOPE

The worm has hope  
That fattens in a skull,  
Smooths his snaky rope  
Some irony to mull,  
Some irony that saw  
Stars helpless in the sky  
And laughed at the stern law  
That dragged them nightly by.

#### THE JUDGE

He was somebody's needy brother-in-law,  
Somebody wrote a letter  
That someone of importance saw,  
A turn came for the better.

They folded him in a black, black robe  
And gave him a salary,

Affairs of all mankind to probe.  
He lacks now not a calory.

He's now a gentleman by half,  
With callouses on his rump,  
Past all worry and riffraff.  
His wife no more a frump

Will wear a gown as bright as his  
Is black, forbidding,  
And he has but to sit and quiz  
Morals that are skidding.

DOUBT

Faith can move mountains.  
Let the mountains be.  
For when mountains stir  
There is no peace, even in the sea.

Doubt dares not touch  
The heft of stone,  
For fear it's better, much  
Better to leave things alone.

NUMBERS

The first great error was arithmetic;  
There have been many since, but that was the first, the greatest  
Flame that lit the wicked wick,  
The pathway to the latest.

If, for instance, a million men  
Were beyond all ways of counting,  
If numbers stopped, as in a sense they do, at ten,  
Mountains of horror would not keep on mounting.

One man can do a vast of harm,  
But when you teach him sums  
He will assail not arm to arm,  
But with his inky thumbs.

*Augustine Bowe*

# DIMENSIONS OF IMAGERY AND ACTION IN THE WORK OF GARCÍA LORCA

THE secret of Federico García Lorca's whole art is that as a poet he had an overwhelming impulsion to supplement the written word by a union of various artistic media; and that despite the consequences to which this led him, he succeeded in remaining primarily a poet. As far as it is here possible to illustrate this endeavor by examples from his main works, we may suggest some of the virtues and defects of his unique accomplishment.

Perhaps what at first strikes the reader curiously is that Lorca's rich world should have been created within the limitations of a repetitious subject matter and a simple unchanging philosophy. Few serious modern poets, dealing with the heterodox world of the present, are content to face it with so few original ideas. And most of the ideas in Lorca's work can be found embodied in the themes and conventions he consistently adapted from Spanish literature. Notable in his folk plays are the insistence on themes of honor, the defeat of innocence when seeking justification in anarchic instinct, and the unconsummated love or marriage whose outcome is spilt blood and death. These appear in his poetry as the quest for spiritual permanence through sensual reality—a search peculiar to the Spanish temper with its mystical investment in what Unamuno has called "the tragic sense of life." If we are to question the propriety of Lorca's artistic uses as distinct from those of his contemporaries, we must examine precisely the way in which he reshaped conventions into the dynamics of his poetry and plays. What processes were involved in his transformation from lyric poet to poetic drama-

tist? What advantages did he bring to the stage from his poetry, and what disadvantages? The answers to these questions should disclose Lorca's particular problem as a poet-dramatist, and by implication the problem of any modern writer interested in the function of poetry in the theatre.

Lorca's early work in poetry was concerned with the possibilities of extending imagery to include effects ordinarily found only in music and painting. One remembers vivid pictorial images: his various representations of the wind—the south wind as “swarthy”<sup>\*</sup> and “ardent,” “bringing seeds of brilliant glances,”—the north wind as a “white bear” or as “polisher of stars”; the sky described as “full of ashes,” making the fields white; children eating the moon “as if it were a plum”; the sea that “smiles from afar/ teeth of foam/ lips of sky”; or how from “Behind a dirty window,/ all the children see a yellow tree/ turn suddenly into a flock of birds.” There are also brief, impressionistic stanzas like simple statements and restatements of a melodic theme, as in those poems of *Poema del Cante Jondo* (*Poems of the Deep Song*) written under titles of specific Spanish musical forms. The effort is nothing new and can most recently be identified with what the American and English Imagists were trying to do in poetry twenty-five or thirty years ago. But for Lorca this was only the beginning of an intensive experimental use which gradually led him to the rediscovery of drama as a basic poetic function. In *Poema del Cante Jondo*, Lorca already realized the dramatic possibilities of the vignette and the episodic narrative, which are such liberal ingredients in the gypsy song and Spanish folk ballad. When this consciousness matures in

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<sup>\*</sup>All translations which appear here were done by the author.

*Romancero Gitano* (*Book of Gypsy Ballads*), the drive to dramatize his imagery outruns the initial poetic function and creates instead a whole world of character and lively conflict which become players and atmosphere for a still unwritten drama. Thus the moon, moving her arms in the air, "shows her breasts of hard tin, shining and pure," and cautions the child not to upset her "stiffly starched whiteness"; or the wind becomes a lusting male pursuing a gypsy girl with a "warm sword"; or "an arm of night . . . a great swarthy arm with bracelets of water," or night "intimate as a little square." Again, in his depiction of three Andalusian saints in *Romancero Gitano* Lorca's expressions are imaginative variations on conventional paintings common to the Spanish heritage of dramatic legends about saints, martyrdoms, and revelations, and of all the dramatic iconography in countless provincial churches. Not only through these adaptations, but through the progressive intensification of the ballad as a dramatic instrument, Lorca gradually reached the province of the stage.

In passing from the lyric-dramatic form of *Romancero Gitano* to the poetic form of his folk tragedies, he was repeating the process of dramatic adaptation as it occurred in the Golden Age. This was the transformation of the original epic into the popular ballad, and then directly into the drama, where both theme and character were continually preserved, though the literary forms had been changed. When Lorca made his gypsy the *modus vivendi* of *Romancero Gitano*, he proved that he could dramatize within a supple ballad form a well-recognized aspect of Spanish life; and in universalizing the gypsy so that the reader was able to identify himself, Lorca had found the hidden door which leads from poetry into the theatre. The same precise use of invention accompanies his entrance into the drama. For he was again

transposing his subject into a recognizable traditional frame when he substituted for the silent, bronzed gypsy, agonized in his dream, the frustrated woman, agonized in her love. How realistically such a woman suited his dramatic frame is evidenced by the singular helplessness of her position as wife and lover in Catholic Spain, and by the fact that the *malcasada*, the unhappily married woman, has been a recurrent theme in all Spanish ballad literature. When she appeared in Lorca's drama, she was recognized immediately as the valiant but doomed inheritor of an already tragic role.

Lorca's first full-length play, *Mariana Pineda*, was called simply a "popular ballad." Obviously, the author was then still unsure of his powers as a dramatist, as he continued to be for a long time afterward. But it also called attention to the fact that his plays were experiments of a kind, which, though they were not always in poetry, were written with the imaginative function of poetry in mind. Later, when he grew more confident of his mission in the theatre, he was willing to let a play like *Bodas de Sangre* (*Blood Wedding*) go on the boards as "a tragedy." In this instance he was supported by popular opinion, for *Bodas de Sangre* became his most universally acclaimed work. But neither it nor any of his other plays (with the possible exception of the still unpublished *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*) is free from a certain fragmentariness both in the alternate use of verse and prose and in the exclusive use of episode to the detriment of action and characterization. That such defects are real in Lorca's plays must be attributed to the frequency with which he transmuted the ballad form and his own poetic symbolism to the stage, as well as to his comparative inexperience with a box-office audience. He was only beginning to develop the rich possibilities of the



medium in the plays he wrote immediately before his death.

Lorca's interest in using musical motifs as dramatic support was another aspect of his poetry which broke through imagery to assume a considerable part of his drama. In *Así Que Pasen Cinco Años* (*When Five Years Pass*) and *Amor de Don Perlimplín por Belisa en Su Jardín* (*Love of Don Perlimplín for Belisa in His Garden*) a musical esthetic all but governs the structural development. Lorca's musical knowledge was more than merely amateur. It is well known that Manuel de Falla once considered him his most promising pupil. Lorca arranged and composed the scores for many ballads in La Argentinita's dance repertoire, and also the music for ballads in his own plays. Federico de Onís has been working on a study of Lorca as a folklorist composer, and there may yet exist a wide body of material to support the fact of his eminence in another field aside from poetry and drama. His musical interests certainly pervade all his literary work. Entering first into the structure of *Canciones* (*Songs*), a musical rather than a poetic form dominates the whole of his subsequent *Poema del Cante Jondo*—a work which cannot be thoroughly appreciated without some understanding of gypsy song, either of the *flamenco* or *cante jondo* variety. The extent to which music grew to be more than a supplementary part of his dramatic work is clearly indicated, for example, by the strategy of dance and song in the last scene of *Yerma* which hastens and inspires the tragic denouement.

As still another esthetic complement, the ballet weaves its way into the plays. This is especially notable in sections of Lorca's surrealist attempts where certain characters exist only to mimic the main action of the play, as the Girl seeking her lover, who encounters the buffoons in the last act of *Así Que Pasen Cinco*

*Años*. From the evidence of his unfinished *El Público* (*The Audience*), there is also reason to believe that the ballet form was actually to encompass the development of an entire play. Lorca also made striking use of this form in *Doña Rosita la Soltera* (*Doña Rosita the Spinster*), which, as a period drama of darkening mood, accords with the more malleable devices of song and ballet upholding all its scenes. The effect of a production of his comedy *La Zapatera Prodigiosa* (*The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*) has been described as "almost a ballet." His directions for introducing characters in the second act of the play would seem to indicate as much:

The Shoemaker's Wife is energetically wiping glasses and cups which she places on the counter. In the doorway, the Sashmaker's Apprentice appears wearing his straight hat, as in the first act. He is sad. His arms hang limply and he looks at the Shoemaker's Wife with tenderness. The actor who in the slightest sense exaggerates this character should be struck over the head by the director. Nobody should exaggerate. The farce always exacts its own naturalness. The author has already undertaken to sketch the character and the tailor to dress him. Simplicity. The Sashmaker's Apprentice stops in the doorway. Don Blackbird and the other apprentice [already seated at tables in the shoemaker's workshop, which has been transformed by his wife since his departure into a tavern] turn their heads to look at him. This takes on the appearance of a scene in a movie. The glances and expressions together create the effect. The Shoemaker's Wife stops wiping and looks fixedly at the Apprentice. Silence.

Lorca actually composed another version of this play which was intended for ballet performance. Lola Membrives, the Argentine actress, now owns this manuscript.

In using musical and dance forms, Lorca was again keeping close to the conventions of sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish drama with its lavish employment of supplementary devices to keep a fickle audience entertained. But whereas his

predecessors catered mainly to the amusement-hunters (the Spanish word *pasatiempo* is in fact used to describe the drama of this period), Lorca, as the poet turned dramatic inventor and impresario, was seeking to astound as well as to re-educate a twentieth century audience grown sluggish on the prosaic fare of a "realistic" theatre. That he did not always succeed was perhaps as much due to his being the lone purveyor of a new dramatic mission as to his creating supplements which were often inadequate to the strictly theatrical requirements for dramatic action.

Finally, there is in Lorca's art the imaginative dramatization of conflict between abstract and concrete forces, developing directly from his concerns as a poet into his inventions as a dramatist. There are at least three characteristic ways in which this dramatization occurs in Lorca's imagery.

The first is as a sudden awakening of animate or inanimate things to an awareness of heightened power which is not ordinarily prescribed in their nature. All Lorca's poetry is full of such imagery; but in his later work, through continual condensation, it becomes almost a stylistic habit, which is his particular signature in contemporary poetry. Thus, in an early poem, he describes a cicada in the field: "You die drunk with light/ . . . and the sun carries off your soul/ to turn it into light"; or children singing in the meadow are "perforating the wind" with their laughter; or "battling under the weight of shadow,/ a spring ran murmuring on"; or "My head leans out/ of the window, and I see/ the knife of the wind/ yearning to cut it off." By this process, Lorca also isolates the pathos and doom inhabiting every person, place and thing separately. Thus in one poem, a horseman, riding to the city of Córdoba which he sees outlined

in the distance "far off and alone," says

Black pony, big moon,  
and olives in my saddlebag.  
Although I know all the roads,  
never will I reach Córdoba.

Death is gazing at me  
from the towers of Córdoba.

In the prose fragment, *Santa Lucía y San Lázaro*, Lorca tells how "The world of grass opposed the world of minerals . . . the nail of flesh against the heart"; in *Poeta en Nueva York*, how the city sky is converted into a "hurricane of pigeons," and how "through the districts of the city sleepless people wander/ like recent survivors of a bloody shipwreck"; in *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*, how death "laid eggs in his wound," "the dove and the leopard are battling," and "the bull is bellowing in his forehead"; and how "Ignacio climbs the stairs/ shouldering his giant death." At the next step, this struggle between abstract and concrete forces suddenly breaks into the speech and action of his plays, where it explains the wild instinctual releases inviting tragedy. In *Bodas de Sangre*, the Betrothed, speaking to the Mother, attempts to vindicate her choice of an illicit relationship with another instead of the lawful marriage with her intended groom:

I was a woman afire, full of flames inside and out, and your son was a drop of water from whom I had hoped for children, land, prosperity; but the other was a dark river full of branches who approached me with a murmur of rushes and a song between his teeth. And I sought to run off with your son who was like a small boy of cold water, while the other promised me a hundred birds which tripped me underfoot and left frost on my poor stained womanhood, on my girlhood embraced by fire.

More implicit in the dramatic structure, this imagistic use is even better illustrated in *Don Perlimplín*, where the old man

subtly contrives to overcome by the abstract power of his imagination the sumptuous physical power of his wife's young body. He impersonates her imagined lover and then commits suicide; but though he dies, he triumphs in the fact that he has thus endowed her with a soul.

A second way in which Lorca dramatizes the conflict between abstract and concrete forces is by revealing the compulsion of one element or quality of nature to become another and throw off its own inevitable form to live vicariously in one of its own choosing. Seeking such a change of identity, for instance, are glowworms who want to be eagles. The same occurs in the verses: "The afternoon says, I'm thirsty for shadow./ The Moon says, And I'm thirsty for morning stars./ The crystal fountain looks to the wind/ for lips and sighs"; or in "The song of water is an eternal thing./ It is light turned into song"; or where "The sea is/ a Lucifer of blue,/ a sky fallen/ for wishing to be the light." In conjunction with this is the process by which concrete things seek physical interchange through an abstract quality, such as Death in the poem of that title in *Poeta en Nueva York*: "What effort,/ What an effort for the horse/ to become a dog,/ what an effort for the dog to become a swallow,/ what an effort for the swallow to become a bee,/ what an effort for the bee to become a horse." When the fury of interchange is heightened, the objects in this vicarious world may become full of cannibalistic intent, as in the poem *Ruina* (*Ruin*):

With whips and lights,  
the battle of sand and water  
was felt behind the window.

I saw the grasses come  
and threw them a lamb which bleated  
under their little teeth and lancets.

Only you and I remain:  
prepare your skeleton for the wind.

Such imagery touches the core of restless instinct in Lorca's chief dramatic characters. Thus the anxiety of Mariana Pineda is repeatedly expressed in metaphors like, "If the whole afternoon were/ like a giant bird/ how many arrows I would shoot/ to close its wings!" It also breathes in the illusion of the spinster Rosita, who would still live as she did twenty years earlier when she first began to await her lover's return, though she knows now he has long since been married to another.

I have been accustomed for many years to live outside of myself, thinking of things that were far away, and now that these things no longer exist, I still pace up and down, again and again, in a cold spot, looking for an exit I must never find.

In *Yerma*, it is voiced by the woman, her husband's impotence having doomed her to childlessness, who feels "two hammer blows" at her breasts instead of the mouth of her own child. In a larger sense, the imagery of a vicarious existence approaches the theme of all Lorca's plays, turning as they do on the frustration of love, the defeat of passion, and the pathetic reaching out of hands that must return to emptiness.

The third facet of Lorca's imagistic inventions in this representation of conflict between concrete and abstract forces can be described as the achievement of a sense of halt in the rush of things forever in motion: the need of all life to find fixity, permanence, and its own endurability in rest. This is closely allied to the second process which deals with the complement of the same problem: the everlasting hunger for motion, change, and illusion. Reflected here are Lorca's symbols of the mirror, the profile, the stone, and the backwater of a stream. In his early poetry we find such evidence as "I felt myself/ in a wide-

openness of time./ It was a backwater/ of silence"; and "Old poplar! you've fallen/ in the mirror of the sleepy backwater"; or the description, "Every song/ is a backwater of love./ Every morning star/ a backwater/ of time,/ and every sigh/ a backwater of the cry." Often using the legend of Narcissus, he suggests the feeling of stillness and permanence deeply underlying the crosscurrents of flux: "Child,/ you're going to fall in the river!/ At the bottom is a rose/ and in the rose another river./ . . . and I myself am in the rose." In *Romancero Gitano*, this sense of halt is achieved through the rigid stylization of imagery, as when "Big frozen stars/ come with the fish of shadow/ which opens the road of morning"; or when "a sky of white thighs/ closes its quicksilver eyes/ giving to the quiet penumbra/ the finality of the last heartbeat"; or through the poems of *Poeta en Nueva York*, when "All the world's light fits into one eye./ The cock sings and his song lasts longer than his wings"; or when the skyline of New York is described as "Profiles of lime"; or when the "norm and paradise of the Negroes" becomes the place where "bodies dream under the gluttony of the grass/ there, coral stones soak up the desperation of color/ the sleepers erase their profiles under the skein of snails/ and the trace of the dance remains on the last ashes." In *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*, Lorca approaches the full dramatic representation when he describes the spilt blood in these terms: "There is no frost of light to cool it,/ there is no song or flood of lilies,/ no crystal to cover it with silver"; or the stillness of death, in these terms: "The stone is a forehead where dreams moan,/ where there is no water bend or frozen cypresses./ . . . For the stone catches seeds and clouds,/ skeletons of larks and wolves of dark . . ."

The structural transference of this imagistic use to the stage

can be illustrated again in *Don Perlimplín*, where the old husband succeeds, by suicide, in securing himself in the voluptuous rush of his wife's memory; in *Bodas de Sangre*, by the symbol of the knife, filling the Mother's talk throughout the play as a foreshadowing of doom, which appears triumphant in her last speech: "With a knife/ with a tiny knife/ hardly fitting in the hand,/ but delicately penetrating/ the frightened flesh/ and stopping in the spot/ where the entangled/ root of the cry trembles." In the last act of *Así Que Pasen Cinco Años*, it occurs when the preceding action is rehearsed in the Stenographer's speech to the Young Man on a smaller stage framed within the principal stage. It is as if the whole meaning of the play, the consequences of an abnormal need for illusion, were frozen into a permanent flaw.

The imaginative extension of imagery into the structure of the drama emphasizes Lorca's sharply defined quest for a personal expression which would merge itself with the anonymity of folk art, a resolution to which he lent all his prodigious inventive genius. Whatever unusual device attracted him, he tried to work into the marrow of his poetry and drama. When he wandered in his surrealist period through a difficult and unresolved conception, he sought to distill the dramatic possibilities from his poetry for the plays which followed. Through such attempts and by conveying the widely connotative folk emotion from the ballad into the drama, he more than once touched the heart of resolution to the problem of poetic-dramatic integration. As any intelligent reading of his work will show, he succeeded in bringing an original dimension to his drama as a result of his accomplishment in poetry. Such a dimension, having perhaps the fault of its origin implicit in its rich expressive possibilities—that of a too literal transference of material from one medium



to another—nevertheless indicated that a courageous poet working in the theatre on his own terms can still command the respect of an audience. There are few modern poets who cannot profit by the example of Lorca's tenacity of dramatic purpose, and there are few dramatists who can afford to overlook the treasure which his imaginative consistency brought to the theatre.

*Edwin Honig*

## R E V I E W S

### POEMS IN COUNTERPOINT

*Four Quartets*, by T. S. Eliot, Harcourt Brace.

THE great beauty of T. S. Eliot's latest book—and it is a long time since there has been a book of poetry in which the form and the matter seem so appropriate to each other—need not blind anyone to the fact that in each poem of this series, Eliot is dealing with a theme not frequently tackled in modern poetry: the theme of the relation of a supernaturally revealed religion to man, and the question of what man, temporal and accidental as he is, can make of this revelation. The intellectual scheme of each poem in the series represents a further stage in the poet's search for personal adjustment to a set of values already given him by the creed he has embraced; and it is this set of fixed and unalterable values, as given by such Catholic mystics as Saint John of the Cross and Dame Juliana of Norwich, that form the framework on which the personal quests of the poet for values that transcend his local and temporal circumstances are set up. The question of the meaning of the whole series has already been ably discussed by James Johnson Sweeney in an article

in the July issue of *POETRY*, and need not be further dealt with at this point. What I wish to stress is the relation of the content to the form and the degree in which the form combines with the content to produce that "willing suspension of disbelief" which is so characteristic of poetry.

The title *Four Quartets* suggests immediately a musical structure, something on the lines of my own *Symphonies* or *Elegies* or Conrad Aiken's *Preludes*. And it is in this respect that I find Eliot's achievement most impressive. This is the work of a better poet than the Eliot who wrote either *The Waste Land* or *Ash Wednesday*. Where the themes of *The Waste Land* were in brutal juxtaposition, and violently clashed with each other—few poems ever written have been so lacking in transition passages, in progress from detail to detail as this one—and where the main theme of the latter (the abandonment of temporal love) carried with it details that did not immediately convince one as being appropriate to their purpose, the relation of detail to the main structure here is nothing short of masterly. The *Four Quartets*, in their use of *leit motifs* and variation, in their contrapuntal effect, are the work of a theologically-minded poet determined to explore difficult ground, the ground of the technical analogies between poetry and music. They are by intention and accomplishment musical poems.

But what is a musical poem? Eliot himself has supplied the answer, in a lecture, *The Music of Poetry*, which was reprinted as an essay in *The Partisan Review* for November-December, 1942; an essay which I think might have served admirably as an introduction to the *Quartets* themselves, inasmuch as it offers the best possible explanation of them on the technical side. As he points out in this essay, it is quite common among poets for "a

poem, or a passage of a poem—to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words.” In other words, the way a poem should sound as rhythm usually presents itself to a poet before the actual words of the poem are set down. Poets are people who go about with tunes in their heads: and whether the tunes employed be those of Mallarmé or Eliot, or of Kipling and Robert Tristram Coffin, makes all the difference.

The other sense in which the analogy of music holds good for poetry is in the question of structure. The free verse revolution in poetry, coming in English-speaking countries between 1908 and 1914, had as its aim the bringing of poetry back to the rhythm of conversational speech and the renewal of poetic structure in that idiom. As Eliot says in the essay to which I have already referred, “It was a revolt against dead form, and a preparation for new form, or a renewal of the old; it was an insistence upon the inner unity which is unique to every poem, against the outer unity which is typical.” Structure, however, must always be a preoccupation of every important poet, whatever the form employed; and the liberation preached by the free versifiers—resulting in much bad prose and some good verse—has seemed most intelligently applied when new devices, bearing a considerable analogy to music, have enforced form on what might have been otherwise formless. These devices are, roughly, the setting of the theme of a poem in several different and contrasting rhythms (for example sad and humorous); the juxtaposition in the same poem of passages of high lyric intensity with others of conversational comment; the repetition of leading themes, with variation; the amplification in sound-intensity possible between the open and closed quality of vowel sounds; and finally, the effect of contrapuntal recapitulation possible to sustain by

returning to one's leading statements. All these devices have their analogies in music; and it is because Eliot is not only aware of them, but employs them with the utmost skill, that one takes pleasure in his work as a poet.

Is this the only reason why, as a poet, he remains so important today? So far as I am concerned, it is. I do not share his scheme of beliefs, which are familiar to anyone who has read deeply in the Catholic mystics; I am appalled by any method of salvation which implies the emptying out of all human sensation in favor of a demand for a miracle:

Only the hardly, barely prayable  
Prayer of the one annunciation.

The negative way to salvation, as recommended by the orthodox, seems to me largely valueless in the present crisis. Rather is it important for most men, who have either lost God or never found Him in the existing churches, to build up God again through the operation of the sense of human solidarity. The ideal of man, rather than of race or creed, the proof of human character through suffering and endurance, the achievement of something resembling a moral conscience—it is for these things we should strive again today, as never before. The Little Giddings of this world can shed little light on the problem that has come upon this age with renewed force—the problem of creating, while we fight for it, a true democracy. To solve that problem we have to start, not with God as defined by the theologians, but with man, and his relationship towards his fellows. Modern science, though it may help towards a solution, cannot provide one. There is, be it remembered, a mysticism implicit in democracy—a system of beliefs possibly not worked out with the

clarity of detail of the medieval schoolmen, but declaring just as surely as Dame Juliana of Norwich that "All shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well."

*John Gould Fletcher*

THE UNSPOKEN WORD

*New Poems*, by Dylan Thomas. The Poets of the Year, New Directions.

The whole problem of poetic obscurity, in modern Anglo-American literature, requires elucidation. The more obscure a poet's work, it seems, the more discussion it will provoke and the more public his private language or mythology will thus become. For the public of modern poetry is intent on discovering, in its favorite poets, the most hermetically sealed worlds; and the modern poet, intent on pure self-expression, avoids communicating anything at all public, anything which, he thinks, might have been thought, felt or worded in the same way by any other poet. By isolating himself completely, so it seems, the modern poet communicates paradoxically with a reasonably large public which is not interested in the public language and mythologies of more traditional communication. Even Louis Untermeyer, a traditionalist, recognizes the importance of this trend when, in a revised edition of his standard anthology, he includes Dylan Thomas.

But this new obscure poetry, though gaining in documentary value by offering us cryptic insights into the poet's private world, yet tends to defeat its own purpose:

You my friend there with a winning air  
Who palmed the lie on me when you looked  
Brassily at my shyest secret. . . .

My friends were enemies on stilts  
With their heads in a cunning cloud.

For while we, a new generation of "hypocrite lecteurs," puzzle to decipher what this private language or mythology actually means to Dylan Thomas, we miss the immediate emotional impact which alone justifies self-expression, since self-expression is generally intended to communicate the emotional thrill of creativeness rather than to expound the plot or facts which inspired or provoked it.

Dylan Thomas' *New Poems*, like all his previous poetry, raises these problems with a peculiar urgency, because one realizes at once that he is gifted and capable, and that his obscurity intentionally conceals something which one would like to understand more immediately. Yet one cannot help feeling, at the same time, that the poet is often confusing or misleading himself almost as much as the reader: in the *Ballad of the Long-legged Bait*, for instance, where the slight plot (and a ballad is fundamentally a narrative poem, like *The Ancient Mariner* or *Chevy Chase*) certainly does not seem to justify such vast elaboration of unusual vocabulary, odd description and violent or exotic imagery, reminiscent of Rimbaud's *Bateau ivre*. This is a perversion of poetry, an interest in the means rather than in the end, in poetry-writing rather than in the poem.

Yet in his perversion of art, as in all perversions, the poet pursues the real thing, more passionately than many who are not damned as he, but with a perverted aim which dooms him, too often, to miss the mark and shoot its mere shadow. And all this might lead us into an elaborate psychoanalysis of our poet and of obscurity in general. What forbidden fruit has he tasted? What secret knowledge must he conceal, from whom,

and why? Indeed, as always in art and psychopathology (which, without being the same, follow the same or similar patterns), there is nothing factually new in this painful knowledge, no atom-smashing formula, only an unusual complex of affective evaluations of fairly usual experiences:

We abide with our pride, the unalterable light,  
On this turning lump of mistakes.

Love, my fate got luckily,  
May teach me now with no telling  
That every drop of water is both kind and cruel . . .

His private mythology is, to a great extent, built around fairly recognizable symbols of pain and love, sex and death, sado-masochistic symbols which often identify sex with death, the death of lover or beloved. In his earlier poems, scatological and more pornographic symbols were fairly frequent; the *New Poems*, in this respect, seem almost bowdlerized, though they have gained in power. Is Dylan Thomas progressing towards some resolution of his inner conflicts, a resolution which will coincide with his achieving relative clarity in his poems? *New Poems* hints this in a few pieces which, less obscure or less narcissistic than the others, are more conclusive, as poems, and more satisfactory: the first *Poem*, *The Hunchback in the Park* and *Among Those Killed in the Dawn Raid Was a Man Aged One Hundred*.

Edouard Roditi

TWO POETS AND THE WAR

*Forty Poems*, by John Lehmann. Hogarth Press, London.

*The Middle of a War*, by Roy Fuller. Hogarth Press, London.

These are good books. They contain some fine poems, honestly felt and carefully written by two men who have studied history

as well as the newspapers. These poets have been educated to a perspective that makes easy, blatant patriotism impossible even under a shower of bombs. Their work is formed by a tough, reasoned world view that forbids sloppy, unexamined emotion. In idea, every phrase is conditioned by the most advanced knowing of our age, by social concepts both noble and universal. In execution, the best criticism of our century has borne down on the selection of words, eliminating most of the trite, the inexact, the inept—those first products of imagination. The books are definitely worth reading.

As can be expected, most of the poems are concerned with the impact of war on personal and social life. John Lehmann's *Forty Poems*, though they include some simple, imagistic work written as far back as 1931, carry for the most part a burden of social disorder and sorrow, tracing the history of Europe from 1934 to 1942. The book by Roy Fuller, *The Middle of a War*, takes the reader into the poet's reactions to the years 1939 to 1942. Those of Lehmann's poems that were written before 1939 are infused with an intense and overwhelming fear of coming evil, such as the one called *On With the Dance*, in which hints of sabotage and riot are contrasted with the "official voices" of the rulers, who declare that "All's well, all's orderly, on with the dance!" Those written since 1939 are rich in the violent imagery of war action and involve rejection of hate and the horizon-bound political mind. Throughout these poems the belief in a whole and positive love persists, and the poet gives the impression that he looks forward with hope to the "day-break" of times to come. Fuller's reactions, on the other hand, are limited to a rejection of the evils of man; he sees the contrast between the ideal and the real—between social aim and



social effect, between what should be and what actually is—and describes no hope in the future, only repetition. His troopers, on convoy to distant battlefields, hear the voices of their ancestors saying "We have no graves. We passed this way, with good defended ill. Our virtue perished, evil is prince there still."

I think Lehmann is the better poet. More of his poems come off. More of them have that roundness and completeness, that integration of emotion, thought, and word, that make for successful poetry. Poem after poem produces its impact. And on examination one finds little rhetoric in them; the individual lines and phrases bear close scrutiny; the words are juxtaposed aptly, freshly, and logically. So wary is he of the padded, meaningless phrase, the mere space filler, that almost every line contains its spark-striking image. It is a pleasure to read him. Fuller, on the other hand, suffers from occasional lapses in attention; he permits himself the luxury of listening contentedly to the sound of his words and lines, so that often his phrases, though always new, sound empty. And his poems tend to sprawl; they need some catalyst, some crystallizing agent, to draw them together.

*Stephen Stepanchev*

#### MAGIC AND MELANCHOLY

*Lines for the Canonization of Pedro Domecq*, by George Smedley Smith. Ward Ritchie Press.

*The Masculine Dead*, by William Everson. James A. Decker Press.

*Ten War Elegies*, by William Everson. Untide Press.

George Smedley Smith is a poet of latinity, a sort of tropical Hopkins seducing life with words:

What o'clock is ensign by the moon? What o'clock is the ice-eye  
of yellowtail in its coronal of parsley, death's décor? Some fish

find time's tide too refrigerative an hour, and so will only glower at the rumor of the grunion run. But if we say of this eye of fish that it is a little watch with hands removed, what shall we say past gainsay of the moon? Deceitful dial by one more metaphor? Tide tells the time, says net, by the high wing of tern, by swing of stern, by sands and spawn of season. Not by the small measure of reason, not by a merchant's treason.

*Lines for the Canonization of Pedro Domecq* is a unique and elusive volume, wherein quadroons "stalked by empasmic butterflies" move in a green and silver carnival. Where:

By pools of the inaudible frogs  
and blue ceramic geese  
Confucius coming on his clogs  
smiles palely at a Portuguese.

The poet explains his disassociation "from everything but my own diminishing dimensions":

When I had in substance approximately achieved starvation,  
It was then an abstraction came and turned off my light bulbs.  
What could be done? Improvising candles by floats of strings in  
bacon grease,  
It was by these stinking lights that I caught sight of the moon  
of the classics!

Of such a poet it is commonly said that he sacrifices meaning to music, or significance to color; of Mr. Smith it is more accurate to say that he derives meanings impressionistically and expresses significance in terms of color.

Up from Anahuac, a moon  
Flows in your garden through an O of stones;  
Its necromancy of fire  
Invests for us a zodiac of faces  
Red lanterns dripping on the eucalyptus.

Until:

All things bring dissolution here for their dream:  
Palm? The skulls of apples left rotting with May;  
The black widow's bankmite; budget of indigent's orange;  
Tourist hand tithing for health with dime on a Love-cult tray!

A genuine poet, possessing a wry magic and a high originality.

Mr. Smith's fellow-Californian, William Everson, supplants the fevered colors of Mr. Smith's Mexican gardens with veiled light and arctic thunder.

The dark expanse of the northern sea  
And the storms across it.

A moody poet with an eye for detail, he has something of Stephen Crane's great gift:

He lay on a ridge of that frozen country,  
By the broken guns, by the smashed wagons.  
He lay gasping raw mountain air.  
He saw in the valley the thin line  
of the rising troops

Waver, the sticks that were men topple and fall.

And feels himself one of that thin line, caught in the waste and the loss of the young men trying their strength forever against the earth.

They try against stone; they try against steel;  
They take it into their hugging arms,  
And fall, and come back bleeding

Until:

We feel again the old promise of fulfillment,  
And know ourselves cheated at last.

This mood of melancholy, moving and well-sustained, is sharpened in *Ten War Elegies*, wherein he speaks for those men, now under arms, who in peace dwelt "outside the narrows of nationalism and its iron pride." Mr. Everson is of those

Who stamp our allegiance  
Only at last on a concept wider than it can hold,  
Denying the right of its militant creed,  
Its arrogant will,  
Its ignorant laws and its dangerous myth.

Caught in the intractable contradiction experienced by men of good will bearing the malevolence of battle, he yet perceives "our place in the terrible pattern,"

And temper with pity the fierce gall,  
Hearing the sadness,  
The loss and the utter desolation  
Howl at the heart of the world.

And ultimately resolves the contradiction mystically:

Disliking the odor of any crusade,  
Knowing only as each man unto himself  
Perceives its truth will Peace come,  
Only as each man sees for himself  
The evil that sleeps in his own soul,  
And girds against it,  
Will the Peace come.

Which is not the resolution of a contradiction so much as the substitution of a subjective myth for an objective one.

*Nelson Algren*

#### CORRESPONDENCE

If it were not that Professor Daiches had misread my comment on his *Contemporary Poetry in Britain*—quite possibly the brevity of my comment was the cause of the misreading—I would not feel obliged to make this further brief statement. Professor Daiches said of my comment: "I gather, therefore, that the main implication of Mr. O'Connor's letter is that I claimed as 'new' poetry which is really old." I do not doubt that there is much in this poetry that is "new." I questioned only the usage of critical *dicta* being passed off as new whereas they had originated with the various Eliot groups. It seems ironic to me that these principles should be turned against the earlier contemporary poetry. I do not mean that all the principles of these newer poets are lifted; I pointed only to those which I felt Professor Daiches was unfairly attributing to these new romantics. Also, I meant to state, emphatically, that this new

romantic poetry gives no evidence of being superior to the pre-romantic poetry of Eliot, Auden, *et al.* Further, I cannot see that it is *childish* or *naive* to use such critical terms as "exclusionist" or "tension." Certainly they have been used enough to have definite meanings and to justify their common usage.

William Van O'Connor

## NEWS NOTES

Several new magazines and revivals of older magazines have made their appearance during the summer just past.

Volume I Number 1 of *Hemispheres*, a French-American quarterly edited by Ivan Goll, contains a contribution, *Poème à l'étrangère*, by St. J. Perse, and an article on his work by Roger Cailliois. Other contributors are George Barker, Charles Henri Ford, William Carlos Williams, Kenneth Patchen, Dunstan Thompson and Parker Tyler, in the English section, and Ivan Goll and Alain Bosquet in the French section. Alain Bosquet, who with Ivan Goll founded *Hemispheres*, has recently gone into the U. S. Army. The address of *Hemispheres* is 136 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn 2, N. Y.

*Wales*, which was founded in 1937 by Keidrych Rhys, suspended publication with the Winter 1939-1940 issue owing to the absence of its editor on active duty. Now Mr. Rhys has been invalided out of the army and the magazine has resumed publication, with a new Volume I Number 1. The address is the same wonderful one, which we repeat with pleasure: Ty Gwyn, Llanybri, Nr. Llanstephan, Carmarthen, South Wales.

*First Statement*, the Canadian literary monthly, which proclaims its revolt from the Canadian Authors' Association and other schools of "stale writing and thinking," is issued in printed format after a year of life in mimeographed form. It is edited by John Sutherland, at 207 Craig St. W., Montreal. As the representatives of a more vital school of Canadian poetry which it exemplifies, *First Statement* names A. M. Klein, Dorothy Livesay, and Anne Marriott.

The Runa Press, 2 Belgrave Terrace, Monkstown, Dublin, sends us the first of a series of leaflets, called *Outriders*, containing poems by five poets. This press is a new venture the aim of which is "to produce, in good form, poetry, essays, and other creative work."

*The Span*, edited by Lucia Trent, Don West, and Alice W. Hoffman, announces that it has resumed publication with the June-July issue. Address 1923 Breman Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Not a literary magazine, but nevertheless a new periodical which may interest our readers, is *Etc.*, a Quarterly Journal of General Semantics, edited by S. I. Hayakawa, at 3300 Federal St., Chicago. Along with a wide variety of articles, ranging from modern art through science and scientific method to American food habits, which indicates the scope of inquiry among the semanticists, the first issue includes a reprinting of E. E. Cummings' poem, *Etcetera*. The magazine draws its name not from this poem however, but from the semantic emphasis on "A permanent *etc.* instead of the dogmatic period-and-stop attitude."

It has been announced that John Malcolm Brinnin and Kimon Friar are to edit *New Poems 1944*. The preceding volumes of this anthology, issued in 1940 and 1943, have been edited by Oscar Williams. Manuscripts should be sent to Kimon Friar, The Mills School, 66 Fifth Ave., New York City.

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

HOWARD MOSS was born in New York City and attended the University of Wisconsin, and is now living on Long Island. This is his second appearance here as poet. He has also contributed to *Accent*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The New Republic*, etc.

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY, noted Irish writer, is at present living in New York City. He is the author of the well-known *As I Was Walking Down Sackville Street*, and a book of his poems, *Elbow Room*, was recently published by Duell, Sloan and Pearce. This is his third appearance here.

RUTH STEPHAN, at present living in Westport, Connecticut, has been represented frequently in POETRY, with both verse and criticism.

EDWARD WEISMILLER was born in a Wisconsin Swiss colony in 1915, and attended Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa. He is the author of a book of poems, *The Deer Come Down*. He has been published in POETRY before.

ALEX R. SCHMIDT, who is in the insurance business in Piedmont, California, makes his second appearance in POETRY.

JEREMY INGALLS is the author of *The Metaphysical Sword*, published in 1941 in the Yale Series of Younger Poets. This is her third appearance here as poet. She is a member of the English faculty at Western College, Oxford, Ohio.

AUGUSTINE BOWE, who practises law in Chicago, was introduced in our January 1941 issue, and appeared also in December of the same year.

The following poets appear here for the first time:

CHARLIE SCOTT MASTERS was "born in Texas and reared in New Mexico." She was educated at the University of New Mexico and the

University of Iowa, where she studied poetry under Paul Engle. She is an English teacher by profession, but is at present employed by the government in Washington, D. C.

ROBERT HUNT, of Sante Fe, New Mexico, is the author of a book of verse, *The Early World*.

MARIE BORROFF is a student at the University of Chicago, where she won this year's Fiske Prize for poetry.

All of our prose contributors have appeared before:

EDWIN HONIG was born in New York City and at present lives in Lafayette, Indiana, where he teaches at Purdue. His article in this issue is part of a book on Lorca on which he has been at work. JOHN GOULD FLETCHER lives at present in Little Rock, Arkansas. He has contributed to POETRY since 1913. The author of numerous books of poetry, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1938 for his *Collected Poems*. EDOUARD RODITI lives in New York City, where he works for the Office of War Information. He is the author of a book of poems, *Prison Within Prison*. STEPHEN STEPANCHEV is a lieutenant in the Army, stationed in Ontario, California. He received our Midland Authors Prize in 1937. NELSON ALGREN, of Chicago, is the author of the novel *Never Come Morning*. He was recently inducted into the Army and was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where "Uncle Sam is hell-bent on making an artilleryman out of me. We do sentry duty one night, hike the next, and wake up to face a couple of pro fighters the next . . . We put in so much time, with so little let-up, that we don't get a chance to think or wonder about the war itself at all. I haven't seen a newspaper for a week and probably wouldn't bother reading it if I did."

# P O E T R Y

## *A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

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### T H R E E P O E M S

#### NIGHT PIECE FOR MY TWENTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY

PUNCTUALLY now, by all we learned at school,  
The stars fade down the angles of their rank.  
First Venus, then Orion. Rule by rule  
The book performs. Law, like a marble bank,  
Locks to the gleaming tumblers, perfect doors,  
The sweep of polished pillars and tile floors.

See, it is so: Astronomer, Man of Law,  
Priest, Radio Announcer—all who Know  
Have prophesied. And all forecasters saw  
The omen that was neither rain nor snow  
But a precise arrangement of the spheres  
Hung in the sky to label all our years.



Now every night beneath this placid moon  
I am assured the ordering of a fact:  
The Western sky falls first and always soon  
The East calls up in light for men to act,  
And always between morning and the door  
The Law is written on the barracks floor.

What was the omen that the wise men saw?  
The dentist, doctor, and chiropodist,  
The technical advisor, the man of straw  
Who dressed in wax, a sideshow specialist,  
And in the dim light of a traveling show  
Passed for a medicine man by saying so?

Under the taut and tabulated stars  
I stand in the barracks shadow like a pool,  
Apprenticed to a sextant and the wars  
Where even murder must be learned at school,  
And sky, a shadow to be memorized,  
Charts the shadow we had not surmised.

This is my night piece to the placid moon,  
Memory, omens, and the Men of Law.  
By clock and stars the ritual is soon:  
The hour ends on the tiniest chime of awe  
And time begins another number here  
Punctual to the midnight of the year.

I hear the sound of sleepers in the dark  
Their uniforms in order for the dawn

On shadowy chairs. Now let one sudden spark  
Of daylight in, and see. before the man  
Stirs back to flesh the clothes have leaped and gone  
Row after row. Should I explore this omen?

There was a shining runner who approached  
Rayed like a star and armored for delight.  
He is not lying dead, his armor breached,  
Nor racing on the wind as once he might.  
He pauses at the lintel of no mood  
Carved to a star's computed altitude.

And all the rest is Law. Beneath what trees  
The stars may drop him, or upon what cloud  
He will return, there are no proofs but these:  
Law will not walk the streets to cry aloud  
Its future. Law may murder good.  
Law is the last law to be understood.

#### MISSION

First the mood hesitates, pistons  
Labor at mass, there is the moment of doubt.  
Then suddenly, madly, the jazzy trance of propellers  
Fills the enormous room of air—and off!  
The clouds, as if in seance, lift upon  
The dervish magic-lanterned in the sun.

Now poised on savage metal with such power  
That terror is a queen by self-delight,

Grace, calm, and majesty attend  
The tons and tremors of her perfect weight.  
On the parabolas of rolling air  
She mounts the thunder like a moving stair.

This is our simplest practice: her intricate parts  
Involved on sun-line, compass, radio, and star,  
Tracked on the trackless wind to the precise  
Coordinates of space arranged below:  
Town X, the summer sleeping on the night  
Across the mills and hills and out of sight.

Mission accomplished, interception effected, target—

But the targets are all toward the future,  
The moment of pause, of poise, where, stitched  
Interminably on the foiled and fluttering air  
Our years scream down like bombs to resurrection,  
Or shatter, or fall wide, or pass conjecture.

#### NIGHT CELESTIAL

You know the towns by neon. The camps and plants  
By white light only. All the rest is lost.  
Except, down there, the moon in the Mississippi,  
And the shadowy cloud we crossed.

And then, far off, the white line of the beacons  
Snapping nimble fingers on the night.  
And at the last reach of the darkened land  
The red wink of the code—the on-course light.

And then The Gulf. Now time and place are stars  
And only stars may hear which way we wish.  
Therefore, because there is no world below,  
Let world be Vega, Spica, Regulus.

A myth and calculus—Shaula, Alioth, Caph,  
Antares, Deneb Kaitos, Fomalhaut—  
Dark Arab, bearded Greek, Nile ritual:  
They sit the shelf of wing that bears us out.

Over the endless lava of the moon,  
Tracking the maddened motors of our flight,  
Sprung from the dimmest history and no world:  
Like Father Ape or Adam—a first night.

*John Ciardi*

## FOR MY INFANT DAUGHTER

Dear child, child of the human night,  
The starless beaming of our fear,  
Error, ingratitude, and war—  
Dear child, I grieve for your birthright  
Beneath these heavens: see, this year,  
How blind, how deep the wound and scar.

What shall I offer besides love  
And gratitude? What counsel give  
Upon a planet hot with blood?  
May you grow wiser than the dove  
Whose passion, warm but relative,  
Sits like the leaf, and the leaf's bud.

May you grow beautiful with grace  
Of limb and movement; may your mind  
Grow fonder of the time's decease  
Than of its habitual, easy place—  
More than conservative, to find  
That more than earthly blessing, peace.

I hope too much? Yes, hope for all  
That state, my human child, which shone  
In many eyes, when the world shook,  
And is not dead but yet may fall  
On you, dear woman worthy grown,  
On me, worthy of your backward look.

*Alan Swallow*

## MR. WHITTIER

It is so much easier to forget than to have been Mr. Whittier.  
Though of course no one now remembers him when he was young.  
A few old ladies who were little girls next door in Amesbury,  
Or practically next door, have reminiscences of pears and apples  
Given them by the famous, tamed, white-bearded saint with the  
Still inextinguishable dark Hebraic eyes; and  
Of course there is the old man—and I for one am grateful—who  
Recalls the seedy coat, the occasionally not too clean high collar,  
And that like many another he read his paper by the hour in the  
privy.

Carl Schurz, finding him rained in by the stove at the village store,  
Thought "So superior to those about him, and yet so like them";  
and

His official biographer decided that Mr. Whittier's poetry was  
the kind

"Written first of all for the neighbors." There are lesser and  
worse.

In any case, here is a city, founded in 1630, present population  
somewhere about

55,000—has been more in boom times, and has been a lot less;  
—say,

In three hundred years has birthed a couple of hundred thousand  
people

And one poet. Not bad. And as proof of the title I shall only  
remark

It is easier to leave *Snow-bound* and a dozen other items in or  
out of

The school curriculum than it is to have written them. Try it  
and see.

Born where the east wind brought the smell of the ocean from  
Plum Island up-river,  
At a brookside haunted in the foggy dark of autumn nights  
By six little witches in sky-blue capes—Uncle Moses had seen  
them;—

Born on a farm to the *Bible*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a weekly paper,  
the Quaker meetinghouse,  
To hard poverty, obscure, and a few winters of country school;  
To die—though only after there were thirteen for dinner, and  
the clock  
Suddenly stopped—ancient with fame, with honorary degrees,  
and

One hundred thousand dollars all made out of poems—I say  
Even this was not easy, though also it is not  
What I am talking about, but is really incidental just as  
Not liking Walt Whitman and never quite getting married.

Neither, under the circumstances, could it have been easy, and  
it was important,  
To stand suddenly struck with wonder of old legends in a young  
land,  
To look up at last and see poetry driving a buckboard round  
the bend,  
And poetry all the time in the jays screeching at the cats in the  
dooryard,  
Climbing with the thrush into the August noon out of the boy's  
sight  
As he dawdled barefoot through poetry among the welts of the  
goldenrod;  
But nothing is hardest which treads on nobody else's toes.

Let us not begrudge Mr. Whittier his white beard, his saintliness,  
his other foibles;

Let us remember him when he was young, not to begrudge his  
rise

As a goddam Abolitionist hated not only in the South,  
Hated by manufacturers, politicians, his neighbors, our folks,  
and all

Who hate the outspoken radical and know a safer way;  
Denounced by the clergy—a serious matter in that time; by the  
good citizens who

Rotten-egged him in New Hampshire, burned him out in Penn-  
sylvania,

Jailed those who read him, and twenty years later immortally  
froze

With Webster on whom he turned his scorn of compromise.

It is so much easier to forget than to have been Mr. Whittier.

He put the names of our places into his poems and he honored  
us with himself;

And is for us but not altogether, because larger than us.

When he was an old man, the Negroes came to him free to come  
and sang to him

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee;

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto  
thee;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

—No more begrudge their freedom than his tears.

*Winfield Townley Scott*



## FOUR POEMS

### THE GOSSIPS

The vulturine necks stretch out; the mean eyes bunch,  
Float over hedges, witch-like, branch after branch,  
Droop down from grimy windows; lust to lynch;

Or narrow to a dark reptilian stare,  
Glide, poison-fanged, from bridge tea to the store.  
The victim walks, his curdled spine aware.

Whatever could this bumbling man have done  
That these cold venomous eyes should merge as one,  
Freeze and transfix him like an evil sun?

### SUMMER SCHOOL MARMS

Their antics could invite the easy sneer,  
Who troop like mangy camels, class to class,  
Clutch gold-topped pens, and hang on every word,  
Write all the stale jokes down, emerge  
Anxious and sweaty from a simple quiz,  
Gobble their cokes, and stare.

For they, all winter, live another code,  
A monstrous piety no one believes;  
Are public conscience, vestals prim and queer;  
Tight-lipped, they moon at forty-five,  
Dress up in campus clothes, fluff aging curls  
And dream of being bad.

No one, in decency, speaks to condemn  
 The girlish simper, slacks, absurd beret  
 Of those who in our dismal towns preserve,  
     Heroically, a culture:  
 Pull leggings on, wipe noses, breakfast smear;  
 Untangle hates and tie reluctant hair;  
 Survive the fool, the crackpot's grim adherents  
 And save, through love, young children from their parents.

## FLORIST'S ROOT CELLAR

Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch,  
 Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark,  
 Shoots dangled and drooped,  
 Lolling obscenely from mildewed crates,  
 Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes.  
 And what a congress of stinks!—  
 Roots ripe as old bait,  
 Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich,  
 Leaf-mould, manure, lime, piled against slippery planks.  
 Nothing would give up life:  
 Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.

## DOLOR

I have known the inexorable sadness of pencils,  
 Neat in their boxes, dolor of pad and paper-weight,  
 All the misery of manila folders and mucilage,  
 Desolation in immaculate public places,  
 Lonely reception room, lavatory, switchboard,

The unalterable pathos of basin and pitcher,  
Ritual of multigraph, paper-clip, comma,  
Endless duplication of lives and objects.  
And I have seen dust from the walls of institutions,  
Finer than flour, alive, more dangerous than silica,  
Sift, almost invisible, through long afternoons of tedium,  
Dropping a fine film on nails and delicate eyebrows,  
Glazing the pale hair, the duplicate gray standard faces.  
*Theodore Roethke*

## WAR POEM FOR BRITAIN

When I say Plato, meaning bicycles,  
Dignified now through urgency and need,  
I am not smiling, for this fruit has grown  
From bitter seed.

I mention angels, catalogued as guns,  
(No hope from doves or chubby, naked boys):  
Ours are the awkward engines that distill  
Silence from noise.

Ours is the laughter that, if heard not seen,  
Sounds like the brittle camouflage of tears;  
Our hopes can now be sighted through machines  
And viewed as fears.

This is the land of Sundays, where the sound  
Of schoolgirl scales falls from accustomed rooms.  
Yet this is music: flowers may flourish still  
Though grown on tombs.

Dear child, the spitfires move across the moon,  
The symbols of our love are strange to read:  
School is not easy where we learn to grow  
Laughter from dragon seed.

*David Daiches*

## TWO POEMS

### NEW YORK SUBWAY

We are Egyptian dead—  
Procession underground—  
The dust-enshrouded head,  
The gray hands strictly wound  
In thongs to keep erect  
The empty bodies swaying—  
Mouths shaped to frozen sound,  
Eyes beyond hope or dread.

Volcanic undertone  
Pours from the funeral wheel—  
The nether spirits' moan,  
The gods who bend to seal  
The lips of pyramids,  
Who rush us blindly down,  
Down through the vaults of stone,  
Past votive alcoves lit  
With torchlight pale as bone.

Will we come to the dark river?  
Will the swift wheels go under?  
Will Isis, the strange giver,  
Blur the black wheels of thunder,  
Blend us with the void?  
And will our bodies float  
With faces turned to sky,  
Staring like Harold Lloyd,  
Wrapped in a Chaplin coat?

THE BLACK PANTHER AFTER EVERY WAR

We have seen the black panther come down to the fair grasses  
of home.

In his eye the reflection of old hatreds, in his jaw the white bone.  
Who is this panther that stands in the hollyhocks, in the tossing  
of round golden-glows,

Who sniffs the winds over melon vines and the full harvest?  
No one knows.

But he seems like the shadow of hopes we had before,—  
Plans and strong trumpets and the crunching speech after war.  
He seems like the brute power of the spirit's past,  
Coming to mock us here, in the garden of rest,

Where this bitterest and last,  
This blackest flesh of fighting, we have turned back to loam,  
To nourish the sweet blue scylla, the larkspurs of home.  
He stands and smells the mellowness that comes after violence,  
Yet his jaw has the same shape, there is death in the eye's softness.  
He seems to see through us with pity. And what is the bone?—  
A remnant, or some foul promise? Will he ever go hence?  
Will he leave us alone?

*George Abbe*

## ATTITUDES FOR A NEW ZEALAND POET

### I

That part of you the world offended so  
Has atrophied, or else your strategy  
Has changed, or else you have so much to do  
The simplest way is seeming to agree.

The falling cities, bones and brutal sky,  
And Eliot cactuses, do not recur.  
Now, it is not an easy question why  
You were ashamed that things were as they were.

Come world, poor Jack-world, and let us reason  
Together, settle down and take our time.  
We shall have bomber and bud in the same season,  
Music and malice both in the same rhyme,

Thunder and tears; committed at this stage  
Neither to horror nor a horrible age.

### II

World, up to now we've heard your hungers wail  
No more than mock alerts. An island moon  
Unspeckled with our deaths can safely sail,  
Escorted by our Never past our Soon.

The great sad duchess by a trick saw pass  
Shapes of her husband and her children dead;  
But further off, darker than in a glass,  
The natural body of our grief is read.

Men of our islands and our blood returning  
Broken or whole, can still be reticent;  
They do not wear that face we are discerning  
As in a mirror momentarily lent,

A glitter that might be pride, an ashy glow  
That could be pity, if the shapes would show.

III

*(the skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum,  
Christchurch, New Zealand)*

The skeleton of the moa on iron crutches  
Figures in no waste land; a private swamp  
Was where this tree grew feathers once, that hatches  
Its broods of dust and guards them from the damp.

Interesting failure to adapt on islands,  
Taller but not more fallen than I, who come  
Bone to his bone, peculiarly New Zealand's.  
The eyes of children flicker round this tomb

Under the skylights, wonder at the huge egg  
Found in a thousand pieces, pieced together  
But with less patience than the bones that dug  
In time deep shelter against ocean weather.

Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year,  
Will learn the trick of standing upright here.

*Allen Curnow*



## FOUR CIVILIAN POEMS

### MERCHANT MARINE

Where is the world? not about.  
The world is in the heart  
And the heart is clogged in the sea lanes out of port.

Not in the work or the west,  
Not in the will or the wriest  
Task is the world. It is all seaward.

Chart is the world, a sheet  
In the hand and a paper page,  
A rendable tissue of sea lanes, there is the heart.

### HIGHWAY

The coast highway at our grade occasioned  
Every night in its middle when the fields were dumb  
An over excessive parleying of engines,  
Plaints  
Like remonstrance.

The trucks prepared to climb, and the road responded  
Four-laned and loud in every lane,  
To the change quick and the recognition.  
It was quite  
A rally and a quarrel in the night.

We in our beds now are not so taken

Up into the story in sleep, because the tanks  
Don't pause or change, the trundle's unintermittent.  
We'd as well  
Live on a level.

WAR TIME

When the sun doesn't rise one day  
In its morning, morning,  
Schoolgoing pauses down,  
Chime chills, the blinds are green,  
Learning can slumber in the morning dark.

But there set out the slacks for the eight o'clocks  
In their morning, morning,  
With a habit move, the schedule for a chime,  
The same books under the blinded arm,  
The bleached gabardines within the dark.

AD

*Harper's* and many magazines contain  
A dead soldier, spilt and unshaven.  
A ponderous corpse of shell and possible pain  
He has struck that printed haven.

There not to rest. He dies there the months over  
In the causes of debate.  
Waiting as at a trench, at the inside cover,  
The burial before which we hesitate.

*Josephine Miles*

## TWO POEMS

### LUMINOUS BODY

Nothing—no echo now—no quivering breath—  
betrays your profile on dissolving air;  
earth cannot harbor you, earth cannot bear  
your luminous body risen from this death;  
in lands which lie between the quick and dead  
you wander now, a child, among the Sleepers,  
whispering your secret to the Occult Keepers  
who smile to see the Light about your head:  
and the Breath, flowing deep beyond world-spaces,  
in shafts of light and dark across the faces,  
who wait, submerged in cerements of clay. . . .  
Your substance flows diffused through air and water  
while the miraculous clear songs, the laughter  
rise, coexistent with Eternal Day.

### IMAGE IN THE WATERS

Beautiful children of eternal summer  
beyond the tick and pulse of mirrored Time  
we heard your footfall, heard the grasses chime,  
the winds repeating the unbelievable rumor;  
the unspoken secret trembling on parted lips  
as each to each cries out in joy: *Oh, I*  
*was not, and Am:* the flower-arching sky  
the cloudy archipelagoes, the high cloud-ships  
bearing you mobile through the flowering ether,

the crimson swans and the snow-white swan's feather  
imaged in waters, in quicksilver rivers:  
we heard your laughter, saw the arching calm,  
the crystal mirror in the Angel's palm,  
the Gift, the hidden (Oh, who calls them?) Givers.

*Katherine Kennedy*

MAN OF EARTH

The birds are flying over the still land,  
Where summer falters into autumn, now,  
And I—a man in a field—who take my stand  
In heavy loam turned skyward with the plow,  
Watch, once again, as many times before,  
Till the last bird has flown into the sun,—  
And turn, recross the fields, and enter my door,  
Weighed with a thought of something over and done.

Twilight will hold a sense of something gone,  
From wood . . . from field . . . out of the silent air,  
Out of the world . . . and evening's coming on  
Will haunt the mind with wings still waving, there,  
Farewell to a man who stands in a field, alone,  
On the earth he loves, and more than ever his own.

*David Morton*

## KEY WEST

Key West . . . violent isle . . . coral  
and blood—long since of caravel—  
chewed by violet currents:  
contrast—your tropical prerogative—  
is here: sly Cuban and blue-eyed Conch  
are here . . . natives of something indecipherable,  
hint of the sun's face, perhaps,  
where tides of gas through eternal light  
and heat erupt yet salvage peace  
such as is found at the heart of fire. . . .

Spontaneous pearl, or bird-link caracara,  
strange sport of nature neither here nor there:  
last key, last bone of island vertebrae,  
yet neither land nor sea

. . . but should you dig  
in coral soil one fathom down,  
a burst of liquid amethyst would geyser through  
—I have seen water in the streets that is the sea. . . .

And so, at night, passing through white streets  
spread out like sleeping beasts,  
heavy with aimlessness,  
my heels made no sound, and by bougainvillea  
of old houses with pitched roofs  
I wandered, lush constellations sagging

low, bulging, almost, to touch the eaves.

Hot breezes swept the Spanish Main,  
entering the reticule of palms and laughing bars,  
juke box excitement of sailors in summer white  
catching the brine's urge, sea swell in hard loins—

while friendly loping Negroes in tight jeans  
accosted one another with bright teeth  
smiling, glinting gold,—rum visionaries!—  
how they howl in church, black Sindbad sinners,—  
mystical and proud, and dirty, too,  
they hug this jasmine isle with grateful clasp,  
pleased, oh pleased, the mainland stars  
but not its stripes  
are over their broad backs to bear. . . .

O southern Key! where freedom is a lazy plant  
by typhoon skies and pirate waters fed,  
whose vital blossom has a tender lip  
which all may kiss,—

upon the shore I knelt,  
by pampas grass and thatched cabanas  
mumbling, This is the staunch island,  
windswept as a mind with no location;  
by the skeletons of sea-change  
haunted; set upon as subway-rushers leap  
on dusk: elemental, dogged by ghosts,  
embodiment of death

at life's center, this is the island  
naked before violence as the cultured heart;

green monsters of the deep lie from my hand—  
outstretched, dilated,—waves away—

yet  
here I felt my childhood surging through  
the dikes of terror, and through the ice  
of thought had melted  
the adult behavior of indifference. . . .

Manhood raging with a need for love  
grew when the wrecked childhood like debris  
had gone aground  
and slimed the future possibility  
and left an ineffectual mind.

Toward shores potential, so our lives  
have raged: whatever island we have sought  
to ease the burden of our eyes  
that inward turning finding a hostile court  
of errors, falsities, and poseur weaknesses  
sitting in tacit judgment, patient, wise. . . .

The meanings we have dared not face  
at last, O island, come back with the tide—  
we find, within eternal flux  
and languid grace of such repose  
as winds and oceans furl,

the answer to our speed and darkness  
and our luxury of sin:  
a world in flower and, in seed, a mind.

But I remember times more angular—  
the neurasthenic flora of the deep  
recall those tentacles of hate the cities wave  
and stretch, and clutching, suck your spirit  
in: the stone of horror, terrible for life,  
surrounded me.

Housefronts and schoolrooms,  
Others' worldly good I always saw from far  
and psychopathic cities breeding war. . . .

Half-lit, but more in shadows,  
living showed a face that split,  
and shared no secret, dwelt in fear,  
and saved desire like a hobby.

Which, natural, sought a tunnel for escape,  
and failing beauty's *esprit de corps*, read  
maps, timetables and geography:  
love of body shifted into love of lore.

But danger blossomed from the leaves  
of travel; roads I saw  
pour mile on mile  
of sun and rail and stone



yet not the adjacent calm of earth.

And there was talk of bombs when I arrived.  
That day the bathers, luminous with sun,  
fled the white beaches; loungers in hotels  
forgot the poker and the rum;

hysteria and dusk together fell  
violent, in riot-flashing hues  
that shivered through the evening's spine:  
leaving nor place nor time to choose—

And now the exile and the derelict  
beneath a menace from vindictive blue  
find, in their wasted gifts, an equal fate  
with sheriff, politician,—hate

has equalled all, at last, huddled together  
from the blundering of greed and will;  
the modern climax, tragic, doctrinaire,  
resolves with grace the wish to kill.

At midnight unseen dogs began to howl;  
fenders with dimmers touched unwary thighs;  
corners of streets showed uniforms like posts  
but dangerous, excited, scanning skies

for grief

—the island had exploded now—

HAROLD NORSE

no bridges lead immunely from the nerves  
—I saw fly outward into opal glow  
my dream of safety, martyred, still unwon.

*Harold Norse*

YVOR WINTERS, ANATOMIST OF NONSENSE

YVOR WINTERS' latest book, *The Anatomy of Nonsense*<sup>1</sup>, might be subtitled: Four prophets of nonsense in modern literary theory and the evils thereof, considered with regard to a doctrine of sense. "Preliminary Problems," a first section of fourteen pages, outlines the doctrine of sense. The major portion of the book, a little over two hundred pages, includes four essays on the four prophets of nonsense. These writers, and the full titles of the essays, are: "Henry Adams, or the Creation of Confusion"; "Wallace Stevens, or the Hedonist's Progress"; "T. S. Eliot, or the Illusion of Reaction"; "John Crowe Ransom, or Thunder without God."

A concluding essay, entitled "Post Scripta," explains the purposes and scope of the book, and issues a call for young sound poet-scholars to stand forth, preferably in the universities, and save literature from the barbarians, into whose hands the four writers Mr. Winters has discussed impress him as surrendering it. Some of the barbarians are specified; and so are some of the young poet-scholars, who, with possible accessions, afford Mr. Winters "hope for the invigoration of American literature" and "the only hope for American criticism."

The four writers are treated as literary theorists who have influenced modern poetic practice. The important addition to Winters' own literary theory made in this book is with respect to "the ideas generating styles" or, in the terms commonly employed here, "the relationship in the poem of rational meaning to feeling."

Winters' theory, thus extended, is formulated in the "Prelimi-

<sup>1</sup>*The Anatomy of Nonsense*, by Yvor Winters. New Directions.

nary Problems"; it is re-enforced and vigorously applied in the critical essays on the four writers of nonsense. In a brief review of a book that raises and adjudicates practically every issue which poets and students of poetry have developed in its long discussion, as well as a dozen or more related linguistic and ontological problems, I shall be unable to present Mr. Winters' arguments and conclusions in their full panoply, or to examine in detail the grounds for his judgments on other writers. I shall need to indicate the nature of these judgments, and to assay briefly the system of thought from which they derive.

The theory comprises both the artistic or poetic process and the critical process. In formulating it, Winters begins with the problem of whether we have any basis for saying that one poem is better than another poem. Experience shows that we have, Winters says; and then by a series of questions and answers he establishes a rational basis for deciding the intrinsic worth of poems. Defining the critical process, he says:

It will consist (1) of the statement of such historical or biographical knowledge as may be necessary in order to understand the mind and method of the writer; (2) of such analysis of his literary theories as we may need to understand and evaluate what he is doing; (3) of a rational critique of the paraphraseable content (roughly, the motive) of the poem; (4) of a rational critique of the feeling motivated—that is, of the details of style, as seen in language and technique; and (5) of the final act of judgment, a unique act, the general nature of which can be indicated, but which cannot be communicated precisely, since it consists in receiving from the poet his own final and unique judgment of his matter and in judging that judgment.

The poetic process is complementary, and its definition goes hand in hand with the establishment of the critical process. Winters sums it up more clearly, however, in the course of refuting Eliot's ideas on the subject:

According to my view, the artistic process is one of moral evaluation of human experience, by means of a technique which renders possible an evaluation more precise than any other. The poet tries to understand his experience in rational terms, to state his understanding, and simultaneously to state, by means of the feelings which we attach to words, the kind and degree of emotion that should properly be motivated by this understanding.

The motivation in the poem of emotion by understanding is the aspect of Winters' extended theory which will offer, I think, the most difficulty to his readers. It supplies what was for him, apparently, a dangerous gap in his critical position. In the preface to *Primitivism and Decadence*, Mr. Winters, while acknowledging his indebtedness to the late Irving Babbitt, took this exception to his critical thinking:

. . . his analysis of literary principles appears to me to be gravely vitiated by an almost complete ignorance of the manner in which the moral intelligence actually gets into poetry.

Winters' hypothesis of motivation is, I believe, an attempt to account for this infiltration. In the earlier book Winters declared his belief that the spiritual and moral control of the poet has something to do with the moral worth of the poem; now he has arrived at a formula for this influence.

In summary, the formula is this. To be rational is to be moral, since morality comes from the understanding of experience in rational terms. The rational—and thus the moral—element in the form of a concept is present in every word; for every word, whether used in poetry or otherwise, is essentially the symbol of a concept. Every word, being conceptual, is abstract, a sign of a universal and not a particular. The emotional or connotative elements in words are not there except as they are put there by individual experience with the conceptual or universal quality, the rational element. Our experience with the rational element

in the word generates, motivates, produces the emotional elements, or connotations. Of these two elements, the rational part is "classificatory"—which, I assume, means invariable—and the emotional or connotative part "has infinite possibilities of variation."

Hence the rational understanding gets into the poem as rational meaning, an essential part of the content; it gets there by means of its inherent, pre-established presence in the words of which the poem is composed. Since they are made inevitable by the medium employed in poetry, rational understanding and the moral meaning which is its expression cannot be omitted from the poem; and the result of slighting them is the confusion or approximation to nonsense of the poem.

Proceeding with this logic, Mr. Winters' system requires that the communication made by a poem be the poet's judgment of his subject matter, a judgment formed of rational understanding and of the emotion which, as applied to the subject matter, it has generated in the poem. This judgment is final, unique, and moral.

So for his examination of Henry Adams, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, and John Crowe Ransom, Winters is equipped with a formula which requires the presence of both idea and emotion in the poem, which demands that they be related in a certain way, and which stands ready to pass a moral judgment upon the systems of morality these writers, if in spite of themselves, according to the formula, have been obliged to reveal in their literary theories and the affected poems.

To readers who know something of these four writers the consequences are highly foreseeable. Henry Adams, as Winters judges him, saw the universe as meaningless because, an inheritor

of Ockham, Edwards, and Emerson, he had been trained to see it allegorically but had lost his faith in the meaning behind the allegory. Adams represents to Winters the indicatively bad results of Ockham's medieval nominalism, Cotton Mather's puritanism, Edwards' mysticism, Boston's unitarianism, and Emerson's Emersonianism—all of which are in a direct line of intellectual descent to Henry Adams and all of which are opposed to Winters' rationalism and Aquinian realism.

Readers may wonder what Henry Adams is doing in a volume treating literary theorists and poets like Stevens, Eliot, and Ransom. Adams gave them, Winters believes, through Eliot, the modern esthetic doctrine of "expressive form"—the idea that, as Adams said, "Art had to be confused in order to express confusion." They are all nominalists, relativists, and determinists, in a fashion set for them by Adams; and their thinking and writing exhibit the fruits of Adams' notion that, as Winters infers, man should allow his instincts to "guide him infallibly along the current of his time to progressively more complex degeneracy."

The difference in temper and philosophy between Winters and Henry Adams is profound. It appears vividly, I think, in Winters' comment on the discovery Adams makes in the *Education* that the dispersion of the mind is a more normal state than its orientation, and the only absolute truth is the subconscious chaos above which the conscious mind tries to balance itself but into which it is sure frequently to fall. In reply to this speculation of Adams, Winters declares his belief that

. . . a balance which is artificial or which is, in my terms, a habit formed by willed perseverance deriving from rational understanding of the need for it, and which preserves one from madness, is in its own nature a good; for madness is in its own nature and quite obviously an evil. A morality which preserves one from this loss of bal-

ance is defensible beyond argument by virtue simply of the fact that it so preserves one; and a morality such as that of Adams is evil simply by virtue of the fact that it aims at loss of balance.

Winters would choose a dogma as a basis for organizing his intellectual and critical principles, not for the inherent truth of the dogma but for the beneficial effects of organization. He argues that if demonstrably good consequences follow a belief, the belief must be true. Henry Adams was concerned not so much with what might be good for him as with what was true about him and the world. Who, I wonder, in this connection is closer to following his instincts?

Winters' judgment on Wallace Stevens is that from his beginning as a poet of great power, "the heir of Milton and Jonson," his philosophy of hedonism has brought about a progressive degeneration in his style and themes. To show this degeneration, Winters compares *Sunday Morning*, an early poem, with Stevens' more recent work. This poem, first published in 1915, "may be," Winters thinks, "the greatest American work of our century." It states, he says, the hedonistic ideas fundamental to Stevens' work.

But, as it happens, the 1915 version of *Sunday Morning*, published in *POETRY*, and, so far as my evidence goes, the 1923 version in Stevens' *Harmonium*, is not the version that Winters is examining, the one that appears in the 1931 edition of *Harmonium*. In 1915 and 1923 the poem was in five stanzas, not eight. Sometime between 1923 and 1931 Stevens made important changes in the poem. Stanzas 2, 3, and 6 in the 1931 version do not appear at all in the earlier form; stanza 8 in the present version is stanza 2 in the original; and stanza 7 in the present version was originally the fifth and concluding stanza. The hedonistic philosophy that Winters detects in the poem and from which he



traces ultimate degeneracy in Stevens' later work was largely put there, so far as I can tell, by the changes Stevens made in the poem not long prior to 1931 and considerably later than 1915.

I infer that this example of degeneration is made somewhat dubious by the chronology in the case. Personally, I do not observe any degeneration in Mr. Stevens' recent work. It has changed. Its themes have become more serious as his poetic attention has apparently shifted from the bric-a-brac of the human situation to some of its problems. The poet who in 1935 published *The Idea of Order at Key West* shows no traces of decline, in my unformulistic opinion.

Winters' examination of Eliot's literary principles is a conflict of formulas, which ends in Winters' judgment that Eliot offers only the illusion of reaction and that he has no justifiable claim to the position of classicism and allied rigors he enunciated fifteen years ago. Eliot's poetic practice and his literary judgments, Winters says, continue to affirm his romanticism, relativism, and determinism, as well as a great deal of logical inconsistency. Whenever right, he is inconsistent.

Now what Winters is doing in this discussion is to oppose what Eliot says about the critical and philosophical process to other passages from Eliot's writing about the artistic process. Winters believes that the two processes are complementary; Eliot believes they are not. In one of the passages cited by Winters, Eliot answers Paul Elmer More's charge of inconsistency by distinguishing between what is legitimate for the critic and what is sincere for the poet. As I understand Eliot, one may at a time of ripe judgment choose his ideals, his moral and critical system; he may not choose his feelings. These come to him, Eliot says, "from the damage of a lifetime, and of having been born into an unsettled society."

Winters believes that rational understanding, not the condition of society, should determine our feelings as well as our philosophy. Perhaps it should; but Eliot has used another formula in his poetry. The case is of a man with one formula condemning another man for having two. I do not know that Eliot is right in having two formulas, instead of one or instead of ten; but I think Winters is illogical in treating a possibly mistaken dualism as inconsistency or nonsense.

Part of what Winters has to say about John Crowe Ransom's critical system is a rebuttal of Ransom's recent discussion of Winters in *The New Criticism*. With Ransom's theories about art as the imitation of a particular experience out of sheer love for the esthetic object, the role of cognition in poetry, the justification of "deliberate obscurity," and the poem as a logical core not quite emerging from a tissue of irrelevances, Winters is in earnest disagreement. Cognition is no substitute for rational and moral understanding, as required by Winters' formula; poetry, since its medium is abstract words or universals, cannot imitate a particular experience but only express a judgment on that experience; and nothing in the poem, including the meter, can be irrelevant to the moral judgment expressed by it.

The colliding of these formulas, although profoundly interesting to behold, does not, so far as I can see, accomplish the demolition of either. At one place in the onslaught, however, Winters falls into a mistake that reveals some of the danger incurred by an ordinarily skilled and percipient critic in applying a tightly logical and narrowly absolute critical system. Winters quotes several lines from Allen Tate's *Ode to the Confederate Dead*, as an illustration of

one of the commonest weaknesses of Tate, Ransom, and their school,

a fear of the abstract statement in itself, a fear so acute that they will invariably substitute for it a trite, vague, or even badly mixed figure if they can think of one.

The lines in question are:

And in between the ends of distraction  
Waits mute speculation, the patient curse  
That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar leaps  
For his own image in a jungle pool, his victim.

Winters likes the abstract statement of the first two lines, but he makes nonsense of the other two. There is, he says, no relation between the abstraction and the image: "the image of a stoner of eyes is fantastic in itself . . . and violent action on the part of that which is patient is still more perplexing."

But, as I read the poem, the image of "stones the eyes" represents the action of turning eyes to stone, not of throwing rocks at them. Earlier in the poem we find these lines:

The brute curiosity of an angel's stare  
Turns you like them to stone

And several other lines anticipate the jaguar:

You know who have waited by the wall  
The twilight certainty of an animal.

In the mood of the poem, the ultimate violent action of that which like a jaguar, or like a curse, has waited for action seems not inexplicable.

Winters' further comment on this passage that cats do not like the water and jaguars do not hunt themselves impresses me as singularly inappropriate. Does Winters imply that the rational meaning of the concept "jaguar" as inherent in the word "jaguar" compels us, if we are to avoid nonsense, to ascribe no unjaguar-like behavior to that animal? Must we assume that words mean what they really mean and not what people, including poets, want them to mean? Once a jaguar, always a jaguar?

Whoever seeks to use truth as a shield must run the risk of occasionally limiting his field of vision. The examples in which Mr. Winters has, in my opinion, been mistaken in the application of his formula do not invalidate it; they suggest, however, that its basis may be too narrow for use without caution and qualification.

The particular part of the formula that deals with the way in which morality gets into poetry through the nature of words will not, I think, hold water. Words are symbols of concepts, but they are also symbols of emotions. The question of what words essentially are is not a negotiable question. They have no nature at all apart from the varied uses that people make of them. Sometimes a particular word signifies a concept, sometimes it signifies an object, sometimes it signifies a feeling about an object or a concept.

Poets, more than other users of language, have felt free to utilize all of these significations according to what they might wish to say. If writers of scientific prose can minimize the emotional elements in words, poets can minimize the conceptual elements. It is excessive simplification to say that poets either do or ought to produce emotion in a line by rubbing the concepts in the words together, like starting a fire from rubbing sticks.

As for rational understanding being the motive of emotion in poetry or elsewhere, I think that sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't. In my experience and study, emotion is just as frequently the motive of rational understanding, in poetry and even in critical systems.

I agree with Mr. Winters that rational meaning and morality have a legitimate place in poetry; and I admire the vigor, clarity, and honesty with which he encounters the essential problems of

criticism involved in his claims for their place. But I do not believe that they have to be there all of the time to the extent that his formula requires, or that they get there in the way his formula provides. Even in the interests of establishing a watertight, absolute, and completely defensible system of criticism, I am unwilling to see the greater portion of the serious poetry in literature removed from the canon as nonsense or the fruit of vicious principles. Mr. Winters' formula, I believe, would, if generally accepted, lead to such an expurgation.

*Thomas Howells*

## R E V I E W S

### TRANSLATIONS OF RIMBAUD AND LORCA

*Selected Verse Poems of Arthur Rimbaud*, translated by Norman Cameron. New Hogarth Library.

*Selected Poems of Federico García Lorca*, translated by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili. New Hogarth Library.

FEW foreign poets have ever been, within a few decades, so often and variously translated into English as, in recent years, Rainer Maria Rilke, Federico García Lorca and Arthur Rimbaud. Some of their many translators have indeed achieved the impossible by being both exact and poetic in their renderings of notoriously difficult German, Spanish and French poems; but many, far from convincing us that they understood the poetry, have unfortunately left us wondering whether they ever understood the language in which it was written.

Both Rimbaud and Lorca are difficult poets. Rimbaud's vocabulary, for instance, ranges from the colloquial French of the man-

in-the-street of 1870 to the most learned and artificial words of nineteenth-century art-for-art's-sake poetry; and each word that he uses is charged with emotion, till one wonders whether to interpret it according to its usual meaning or a new, private and distorted one, just created by Rimbaud. Thus even Norman Cameron, so meticulous in all respects, translates the title of one poem, *Chanson de la plus haute tour*, as *Song From the Highest Tower* when "of the Highest Tower" is both the more usual and the correct meaning. I have gone carefully through several of Cameron's translations with René Etiemble, who knows and understands Rimbaud better than any other French critic; though we found occasional lines where we felt that the translator had missed one of Rimbaud's points, and though much of the French original's subtlety and richness is necessarily lost in an English verse-translation, we were both repeatedly astonished by the accuracy and poetic elegance of Cameron's renderings. He has indeed managed to translate ninety per cent of Rimbaud's meaning and, at the same time, to reconstruct in English something very similar to the polished Parnassian form of the nineteenth-century French originals. *The Stolen Heart*, for instance, is a masterpiece of translation; and it is to be hoped that Mr. Cameron will now translate some of the prose poems of *Illuminations* and the *Season in Hell*, which has not yet been adequately or accurately rendered into English.

Five years ago, Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili published a volume of rather literal translations of several of García Lorca's poems. Now they have improved and corrected these earlier versions, republishing them together with some new translations of other poems. Their selection represents rather well Lorca's varied output. A fascinating puzzle, forbidden us now by con-

siderations of space, would be to collate and compare the various existing translations of many of these poems (Rolfe Humphries has also translated the *Ode to Walt Whitman*, for instance, and A. L. Lloyd the *Lament for Sanchez Mejias*), and thus indicate the task which yet awaits some future editor of a complete works of Lorca in English. For the hopes raised by Spender and Gili—or indeed by any of Lorca's translators—in individual lines of their versions are rarely fulfilled by the whole poem. One is thus tempted to construct new artificial translations, picking one perfect line from one version, another from another, in an almost hopeless attempt at rendering every subtlety of the Spanish original.

And as one reads such poetic translations of Rimbaud or of Lorca, one begins to wonder whether, in an age of difficult poetry, the concessions which they require are still justified. Perhaps more scholarly and pedestrian prose translations would be more satisfactory; for the poetic translation, while destroying the form of the original poem, also sacrifices much of its meaning which can no longer fit into the new form of the new poem created by the translator. But such thoughts would lead us to a discussion of the whole poetics of translation, which I have discussed before and must never cease discussing, since true translation exists only as an ideal which every translator, however skilful or honest, must necessarily always betray.

*Edouard Roditi*

## INFLUENCE AND ORIGINALITY

*The Sun at Noon*, by James Hearst. The Prairie Press.

*Arenas*, by Tom Boggs. Coward-McCann.

Remembering that the early volumes of many excellent poets read more like confessions of influence than poetry tempers the severity with which one is inclined to review James Hearst's second book of verse. There are eight poems about Iowa farmers that Frost might have written about New England farmers, five poems William Carlos Williams might have written and discarded, half a dozen poems Masters might have written and printed.

In most instances the influences have assimilated the poet. Except for different words and greater brevity, *Good Friday* is *Mending Wall*, rhythm, idea, whimsy, and all. If Frost has said the last word about Iowa farm life, it is difficult to see why Hearst writes about it at all. Nor does there seem to be much point to publishing moderately successful imitations of Williams and Masters. For the most part, *The Sun at Noon* consists of finger exercises rather than successful poems.

There are four poems in this volume that promise better work in the future. *Guarding the Fire* suggests Frost's narratives, but it is Frost absorbed by Hearst. *On Relief*, a poem that is cleverly integrated about the somewhat shocking figure of the "man with want-ads in his eyes," is altogether Hearst's own. *The Same in This as Other Lands* and *Quarrel* are good and original poems. One cannot dismiss superciliously the poet who wrote them.

Tom Boggs is thirty-eight and *Arenas* is his first book of poems. Although one suspects the influence of Yeats, Hopkins,



and Hardy, and is occasionally very aware of the influence of Fearing, there is no doubt that the poet has absorbed his ancestors. Except for the only fair *Children's Corner* and the somewhat banal *Don Giovanni*, all of the poems he has saved are good reading and some of them are first-rate.

Boggs is not a major poet, a poet with a message, a startling innovator. His forms are the simple and old ones, generally the quatrain, sometimes the couplet. In fitting them to his ideas, however, he makes the old forms new as a good poet must. It is the same with his rather simple, colloquial vocabulary. The words are freshly, if not startlingly, recombined, and you get what Tom Boggs and no one else has said from the poems.

There is a central theme running through most of them. Boggs believes in the first person plural rather than in the first person singular. As he puts it in *Mirrors*:

It is a false and shallow vision  
That finds but one face in the glass,  
Robbing the snowstorm of its flowers,  
The fierce rose of its mass:

It is a false and shallow mirror  
That shows but wrong or right,  
Robbing the bride of her despair,  
The doomed of their delight.

One does not expect or get naive oversimplification from such a poet.

Most of his poems are lyrics and most of his lyrics fulfill his own demand that a good lyric should be a "legitimate shock." I should like to quote enough of them to make sure that the reader will go to the bookstore and buy. I do not want to forget the poem that starts,

At the bottom of the sea

Fish move and hunt and pair,  
We move about on the floor  
Of a sea of air . . .

nor *Flower, breast, music, love*. I should like to quote *Dread Growth, Metaphysical Morning*, and half a dozen others, but I will quote only one:

Two kinds of wolves I saw;  
The starved who hunted in the cold,  
Low of back and lean of jaw,  
Mean and sorry to behold:  
The other wolves (who did not stir),  
Were great of flesh and sleek of fur:  
They seemed a race of wolves apart!  
Except wolf eyes, except wolf heart.

There is here, I think, great precision, great economy, and perfect integration. The same qualities, in the service of his sceptically-believing, pessimistic-optimistic vision, are in more than a dozen of Tom Boggs' other poems.

*Harvey Curtis Webster*

#### CONTROL VERSUS PASSION

*The Bright Plain*, by Charles Edward Eaton. University of North Carolina Press.

*This Is My Beloved*, by Walter Benton. Knopf.

The poems of Eaton and Benton set each other off in a rather conspicuous way.

Eaton is a sensitive poet, reacting acutely and intelligently to the things in which he is interested. These are many, certainly, and run a wide path from nature to man: the influence of nature upon man, and the havoc which man has made of nature. His interests are broad and penetrating; his insights are objective yet vividly personal. Eaton's rhythms, too, have a

rich variety that is suggestively integrated with the variety of his matter. He is a poet, in short, of a good many themes, moods, and methods.

But Eaton's most important quality is perhaps his control. It seems clear that he has disciplined himself and his talent. There is control in his diction and his rhythms. His words do not run away from him, as they do with so many writers and poets. His poetry is, in this regard, a mature performance, with a control that is intelligent, and refreshingly objective. Eaton's mature sensitivity and objectivity are pointed most dramatically in those poems in which he reworks the materials of a fellow poet. In this connection, one will learn much of Eaton's mind and art by comparing T. S. Eliot's *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* with Eaton's many night pieces, particularly *Night Quest* and *Summer Night*; and even better, Eliot's *Journey of the Magi* and the beginning of *The Waste Land* with Eaton's *Cold Spring*:

We had thought that in this land  
Life and death would be things apart, would cry  
Aloud to us with different voices;  
We had thought that birth and the giving-up  
Of breath would be two seasons of the world;  
We had not thought to find the new grass  
Cold in April, but the spring is a time  
Of coldness even after the sun comes . . .  
All the pain in the scent  
Of lilacs, in the cold rain on the cheek,  
Pricks with the edge of this remembered faith,  
Which haunts the land of grasses and lilacs . . .

At the same time, Eaton's poetry is not without its defects. Though he has control of his diction, he does not seem to have quite the same control of his theme. His words do not run away with him, but his idea often does. The result is that a

good many of the poems fail to live up to the promise of their opening lines; for example, *The Bright Plain*, *These Are the Things of Youth*, *A Letter to a Young American*. The song is ended, the melody lingers on—but what's happened to the music? The clue seems to be in the excess of that very control which is perhaps his most notable merit. The mills grind slowly and exceedingly sure and fine, but they grind slowly. There is not enough ferment in Eaton's poems, not enough action and force.

On the other hand, Benton's poems have more than enough ferment. His poems are a startlingly personal, "frank" verse diary—"remarkable," it says on the book jacket—of a love affair that waxed and waned between April and November. There is a good deal of territory that can be covered from April to November, and Benton covers it pretty thoroughly.

Though there is plenty of power and strength here—even virility, some reviewers have sighed nostalgically—there is nothing of the variation of content that one finds in Eaton's poems. One may forgive Benton this; for his poems constitute, for the most part, a significant variation on the same theme. For the most part—but not always. After all, so much of it is so much of the same thing, and though the first dozen or so poems are startling, the sequence tends after a while to become repetitious. And many who finish the book will wonder whether even the best of the poems were startling because of their poetry, or because of their subject.

While I am inclined to think that Benton's poetic gifts are considerable, the work with which he is here represented is too effusive. There is too much agitation, and not enough control and objectivity. Every once in a while there is a genuine wave of emotion that has both strength and depth. But too often,

what seems to be a wave turns out to be a gush.

Yet it seems to me that both books are worthwhile, each in its own way. Eaton can surely learn something from Benton's spontaneity. It remains to be seen whether Benton can discipline his art and give it that universality and control which it needs.

*Leo Shapiro*

#### AN AMERICAN GENERATION

*Forty Poems 1935-43*, by Robert Knox Bishop and John Claiborne Davis. St. Alban's Press.

*Injunction*, by Vincent Ferrini. Sandpiper Publishers.

Mr. Bishop and Mr. Davis say that the poems they have assembled here are the biography of their generation from the Depression of 1932 to the exaltation of 1943, by way of Munich.

The poems themselves say nothing quite so portentous; they are young men's poems about drinking and fighting and listening to music and going with girls. They are terse and epigrammatic:

I know you love me: things are done  
in crazy fashion in this life.  
I love another: there's the rub,  
the nuisance, and the bloody knife.

They are banal:

Tonight toward love and moonrise  
I rise and turn my way  
because I know tomorrow brings  
loneliness and day.

They are sure and concise:

This is the brisk and fragrant year of death,  
this the year of the arrow and the busy fly.

They are poems about Hart Crane and Manila and Petronius Arbiter and about being dead. They are romantic and difficult



37,000 blades of wheat  
Bound by a wire of Union  
Keep bread for 130,000 mouths

One man is a leaf in the gutter  
kicked by winter

One man is an atom of sand  
37,000 are a brick . . .

No one listens to you or me  
But They become ears when WE talk

*Leo Kennedy*

#### MINER MINSTRELS

*Coal Dust on the Fiddle*, by George Korson. University of Pennsylvania Press.

America's last frontier, Mr. Korson points out, was not fought west of the Pecos, but in the coal camps. For it was about the mines that men of a hundred racial strains fought the bitter battles of democracy long after all other American workers had gained the rights of free men.

Isolated by both geography and their occupation, forgotten by the courts and dominated by feudal operators, they came to depend wholly upon their own communal folk life for the making of songs and stories. Their victories, their defeats, their hopes and their disasters were celebrated by minstrels unknown outside the camps.

Don't forget me, little darling,  
When they lay me down to rest,  
Tell my brothers all the loving words I say.  
Let the flowers be forgotten  
Sprinkle coal dust on my grave,  
In remembrance of the U.M.W. of A.

The manner of these minstrels was narrative, their tone sentimental, and their origin commonly Celtic:

There's no better whistler cocks a lip,  
No better singer twings the thrum,  
I can dance or hold the candle,  
I'm the celebrated bum.

One of the most touching aspects of the songs that record catastrophe is their common inability to match the size of the disaster. For example, the best song on the Monongah calamity, where four hundred men were literally blown to bits by gases, concludes with the moral:

Away down in the coal mines,  
Where those deadly gases roam,  
If not properly attended to  
Your father won't come home.

The minstrelsy of the mines appears to have been modified, as the coal camps' isolation was lessened, toward oversimplification and imitativeness. With the result that a number of songs recorded here are merely paraphrases of such old timers as *The Buffalo Skinners*, and *The Boston Burglar*. Yet in all the parallel between the miner's piety and his devotion to his union are clearly evident:

We are fighting not for money  
We are fighting not for fame  
We are fighting for our bread alone  
So stand in Jesus' name.

Or as in:

I can tell de world 'bout dis,  
I can tell de nation I bin blessed,  
Tell 'em what John Lewis has done,  
Tell 'em dat de union has come,  
An' it brought joy, great joy, unto my soul.

In opposition to the hired revivalists, who urged simple folk



to "put the evil thought of unionism out of your heads," were the voices of women more devout than any rented evangelist:

When he was a union man,  
Scabbing was his crave,  
Now he is scabbing  
And he's troubled to his grave  
Lord, I wish he was a union man again.

Or, to the tune of *After the Ball*:

I'll tell it all, pet, tell all my shame,  
I was a scab, pet, I was to blame.

The book has a fine rise and fall in presentation, varying between the clog dance rhythms of *Be Kind to Me Douter* to songs that stand like a very statue of grief:

My lamp is my sun  
And all my days are nights.

A book of equal interest to the poet, the folklore collector, and the labor historian.

*Nelson Algren*

## POETS IN UNIFORM

A signal arrived at Air Headquarters, Malta, from Headquarters Middle East. Its priority category was "Important" and, in order to illustrate one of the unusual incidents in the life of a poet in uniform, I will quote it:

Poem requested from Pudney for 25th Anniversary 30 to 36 lines longish meter suggested. As required publication journal signal if possible if not fastest.

The twenty-fifth anniversary in question was that of the Royal Air Force in April this year. The request, besides illustrating the profound eccentricity of the British race, took me aback as I sat on one of the bastions overlooking Grand Harbor reading it.

I half decided to be very angry—the audacity of being told off to do a poem like a butcher in happier days cutting off meat!

Finally it was pure vanity which made me decide to write the poem, because the idea of signaling a poem in the midst of a Mediterranean battle was, frankly, irresistible.

Doing work to order does not always produce the worst, and I felt strongly enough about the R.A.F. to make the writing of this piece an enthusiastic enterprise. I believe it was a good poem. (I surprised myself.) And then I took it to the censor and he thought it was a good poem too. So my corporal sat at the typewriter and started off on a signal form like this:

28 line poem for 25th anniversary as requested begins stop fitters  
and riggers comma draughtsmen and engineers comma new line let  
us consider twenty-five years colon line . . .

It caused a commotion in the cypher office, but we soon convinced them how unimportant it was to the present battle or any other; and they sent it off in plain language. We often wondered in Malta what the Axis made of it. Would they accept the fact that Britain's fighting men were sending each other poems? Or are they still trying to break up that rhythmical code? Two days later the poem was published simultaneously in London, Cairo and Valetta, and I was pleased because I like to think of as many people as possible reading the poems I write.

That adventure merely demonstrates that poetry writing scrapes along in most unexpected circumstances and it has no bearing upon the question of war poetry and the cry of "where-are-the-war-poets?" which from time to time has been heard these last four years.

Poetry, like youth, exists at all times, and like youth it suffers from generalizations which are all too rarely truthful. Poets write

because they are human, because they feel their humanity with startling intensity. Being human they become entangled with great events, but it does not follow that they write great poetry about such events. John Milton was intimately connected with the spectacular upheavals of Britain's Civil War, but it would be absurd to suggest that he ever became a war poet in the sense of branding the conflict upon his verse.

No, the war poet is a modern legend, originating from the soldier-poets of the last war, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves and many others. This poetry reached wide appreciation after the war. Robert Graves, who survives, lives to write his greater poetry upon themes dissociated from war.

The poet has always followed his nose. Where that deep consciousness of humanity is for him he will seek his themes. Walt Whitman or the great Soviet poet Mayakovsky may find them in the conflict of the mass. Gerard Manley Hopkins or Beddoes may find them in individuals. The classification of war as a theme is irrelevant.

I have written poems for ten years or so, and the coming of war seemed to bludgeon all desire or need for self-expression. Then in the Royal Air Force I met circumstances which drove my thoughts into the shape of verse. Whether I lost my friends or whether I noticed the splendid summer cornfield in the midst of the blitz is not ultimately important, but at the time I needed to write and, writing, happened to write war poetry. If my work expressed anything of the bright objective humanity of the flying people I am content.

On the subject of war poetry I think we are inventing a non-sensical category. Poetry survives the longest wars.

*John Pudney*

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS

THIS November POETRY has the pleasure of announcing six prize awards. We list them with grateful acknowledgment to the donors.

*The Levinson Prize*, founded in 1914 and awarded for twenty-six years through the generosity of the late Salmon O. Levinson, internationally distinguished lawyer and publicist; given again this year by his family, in memory of Helen Haire Levinson and Salmon O. Levinson.

*The Guarantors Prize*, awarded for the thirtieth time; presented this year by the Friday Club of Chicago.

*The Oscar Blumenthal Prize for Poetry*, founded in 1936 by Mr. Charles M. Leviton of Chicago, and to be given annually as a memorial to a great student and admirer of modern verse by his close friend.

*The Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize*, awarded for the ninth time, and to be continued annually by three friends of the magazine in memory of a lover of poetry.

*The Harriet Monroe Lyric Prize*, awarded for the seventh time through the generosity of Marion Strobel (Mrs. James Herbert Mitchell) of Chicago; to be continued annually.

*The Fellowship Prize*, a new prize awarded through the generosity of The Chicago Poets' Class, a group of young Negro poets organized by Inez Cunningham Boulton in 1941 and at present under the direction of Katinka Loeser, to be awarded annually.

The editors and advisory committee of POETRY constitute the jury of awards. Poems by members of the jury are not consid-

ered for prizes. It has also been against our policy to repeat the awarding of individual prizes. Under this ruling the following poets of our thirty-first year are *hors concours*: E. E. Cummings, Karl J. Shapiro, Wallace Stevens, Mark Turbyfill and Robert Penn Warren for the Levinson Prize; Winfield Townley Scott for the Guarantors Prize; Stanley J. Kunitz for the Blumenthal Prize; John Malcolm Brinnin, William Pillin, Karl J. Shapiro and David Schubert for the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize; Louis MacNeice and John Frederick Nims for the Harriet Monroe Lyric Prize.

We proceed with the awards, which are made for poems printed during the past year in Volumes LXI and LXII of POETRY (October 1942 through September 1943), with reference also to each poet's general achievement or promise.

THE LEVINSON PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems by an American citizen published in POETRY during its thirty-first year, is awarded to

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN

of Poughkeepsie, New York, for *Spring Ritual*, a group of eight poems, printed in the April 1943 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:  
CARL SANDBURG (1914); VACHEL LINDSAY (1915); EDGAR LEE MASTERS (1916); CLOYD HEAD (1917); J. C. UNDERWOOD (1918); H. L. DAVIS (1919); WALLACE STEVENS (1920); LEW SARETT (1921); ROBERT FROST (1922); EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1923); AMY LOWELL (1924); RALPH CHEEVER DUNNING (1925); MARK TURBYFILL (1926); MAURICE LESEMANN (1927); ELINOR WYLIE (1928); MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT (1929); HART CRANE (1930); EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1931); MARIANNE MOORE (1933); HORACE GREGORY (1934); MARY BARNARD (1935); ROBERT PENN WARREN (1936);

## *Announcement of Awards*

LOUISE BOGAN (1937); H. D. (1938); E. E. CUMMINGS (1939); ROBINSON JEFFERS (1940); ARCHIBALD MACLEISH (1941); KARL J. SHAPIRO (1942).

THE GUARANTORS PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its thirty-first year, is awarded to

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS

of South Bend, Indiana, for *In Our Time*, a group of six poems, printed in the January 1943 issue, and *Six Poems*, printed in the September 1943 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

VACHEL LINDSAY (1913); CONSTANCE SKINNER (1914); H. D. (1915); JOHN GOULD FLETCHER (1916); ROBERT FROST (1917); AJAN SYRIAN (1918); MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT (1919); EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1920); FORD MADDOX FORD (1921); ALFRED KREYMBORG (1922); LOLA RIDGE (1923); AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL (1924); LEONORA SPEYER (1925); AGNES LEE (1926); MALCOLM COWLEY (1927); MARION STROBEL (1928); H. BONER (1929); ABBIE HUSTON EVANS (1930); WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1931); ELDER OLSON (1933); HILDEGARDE FLANNER (1934); WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT (1935); MARYA ZATURENSKA (1936); W. H. AUDEN (1937); WILLARD MAAS (1938); STEPHEN SPENDER (1939); KENNETH FEARING (1940); PAUL ENGLE (1941); ST.-J. PERSE (1942).

THE OSCAR BLUMENTHAL PRIZE FOR POETRY, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its thirty-first year, is awarded to

JOHN CLARDI

of Medford, Massachusetts, at present a private in the Army and stationed at Lowry Field, Denver, Colorado, for *Three Poems*,

printed in the October 1942 issue, and *Five Poems*, printed in the April 1943 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

MARION STROBEL (1936); THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL (1937); DYLAN THOMAS (1938); MAXWELL BODENHEIM (1939); MURIEL RUKEYSER (1940); STANLEY J. KUNITZ (1941).

THE JEANNETTE SEWELL DAVIS PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems by a young poet published in POETRY during its thirty-first year, is awarded to

#### RANDALL JARRELL

of Austin, Texas, at present a corporal in the Air Corps, for *Four Poems*, printed in the August 1943 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

JESSE STUART (1934); DAVID SCHUBERT (1936); WILLIAM PILLIN (1937); D. S. SAVAGE (1938); JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN (1939); ROBERT FRIEND (1940); KARL J. SHAPIRO (1941); KATINKA LOESER (1942).

THE HARRIET MONROE LYRIC PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a lyric poem or group of lyric poems published in POETRY during its thirty-first year, is awarded to

#### H. B. MALLALIEU

of London, at present serving with the British Coastal Anti-aircraft, for *Days of Waiting*, a group of five poems, printed in the October 1942 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

ROGER ROUGHTON (1937); H. H. LEWIS (1938); MALCOLM COWLEY (1939); LOUIS MACNEICE (1940); FREDERIC PROKOSCH (1941); JOHN FREDERICK NIMS (1942).

THE FELLOWSHIP PRIZE, of fifty dollars, for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its thirty-first year, preferably that which most profoundly contributes to or expresses understanding and contact between nations, races, classes or creeds, is awarded to

PATRICK ANDERSON

of Montreal, Canada, for *Twelve Poems*, printed in the March 1943 issue

The above lists of previous awards should not be regarded as a complete record of the prizes given by POETRY. Many other awards, ranging from \$100 to \$500, have been made during the history of the magazine. The reader is referred to our November 1936 issue for a nearly complete list of poets honored by earlier prizes.

*We again strongly recommend, to individual patrons and to clubs alike, the endowment of poetry prizes and scholarships similar to those given annually, in the larger American communities and abroad, to painters, sculptors, architects, and musicians. In order to encourage such endowments, either as gifts or bequests, it is our privilege to suggest two plans which offer as much freedom as possible from local and conservative prejudice. The editors will be glad to correspond with anyone interested.*

#### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN CIARDI, of Medford, Massachusetts, is at present a private in the Army Air Corps, stationed at Lowry Field, Colorado. He is the author of a book of poems, *Homeward to America*. He is awarded our Blumenthal Prize for 1943 (see announcement of awards in this issue).



## POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

ALAN SWALLOW graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1936, and is at present associate professor of English at Western State College, Gunnison, Colorado. His book, *XI Poems*, has just been issued by the Prairie Press.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, of Providence, Rhode Island, is the author of three books of poetry, the most recent of which is *The Sword on the Table*, published by New Directions. He received our Guarantors Prize in 1935.

THEODORE ROETHKE was born in Saginaw, Michigan, and educated at Michigan and Harvard. He is now in the department of English at Bennington College. He is the author of a volume of verse entitled *Open House*. He has contributed frequently to POETRY and other magazines.

DAVID DAICHES is the author of several volumes of criticism, including *Poetry and the Modern World* and *The Novel and the Modern World*. Indefinitely postponing his return to England, he is now in New York City at work for the British Information Services.

GEORGE ABBE was born in Somers, Connecticut, in 1911 and was educated at the University of New Hampshire. He is now teaching at the Hartford Seminary Foundation in Connecticut. He has published a book of poems, *Wait for These Things*.

ALLEN CURNOW, a young poet of Christchurch, New Zealand, is the author of a book of poems, *Island and Time*, published in New Zealand by the Caxton Press.

JOSEPHINE MILES is now teaching at the University of California. She has written two books of poems, *Lines at Intersection* and *Poems on Several Occasions*.

DAVID MORTON, a contributor since 1920, is the author of *Harvest*, *A Man of Earth*, *Spell Against Time* and other books of poems, and has edited several anthologies. He is professor of English at Amherst.

KATHARINE KENNEDY had her first poems published in POETRY at the age of eighteen under the pen name of Penelope Russ, and has since appeared in numerous magazines. She is the author of two volumes of verse, the most recent of which is *Music of Morning*. She is at present on the editorial staff of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service in Washington, D. C.

HAROLD NORSE is twenty-five years old and a graduate of Brooklyn College. He writes: "In New York I have been a ballet dancer, clerk, machinist and movie extra; in Alabama a sheet metal worker; private school tutor of languages in Miami Beach, and also beach boy. At present I am living in Manhattan." He has been published in various little magazines. This is his first appearance here.

Of our prose contributors Mr. Webster and Mr. Pudney appear here for the first time

THOMAS HOWELLS teaches at Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington. EDOUARD RODITI works for the Office of War Information in New York City. He is the author of a book of poems, *Prison Within Prison*. LEO SHAPIRO teaches in the Department of English at De Paul University, Chicago. HARVEY CURTIS WEBSTER teaches contemporary literature and creative writing at the University of Louisville. He has been published in *The New Republic*, *The Sewanee Review*, etc. LEO KENNEDY was one of the well-known Montreal group of Canadian writers. He is the author of a book of poems, *The Shrouding*, published in Canada. He is now an American citizen and lives in Chicago. NELSON ALGREN, author of two novels, the most recent of which is *Never Come Morning*, is now a private stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. JOHN PUDNEY, a flight lieutenant in the R.A.F., is the author of three books of poetry, *Disposal Point*, *Beyond This Disregard*, and *South of Forty*.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Afternoon of a Pawnbroker, and Other Poems*, by Kenneth Fearing. Harcourt Brace.  
*Cloth of the Tempest*, by Kenneth Patchen. Harpers.  
*The Virginia Poems*, by Francis Coleman Rosenberger. Gotham Book Mart, N. Y. C.  
*No Boundary*, by Lenore G. Marshall. Henry Holt.  
*XI Poems*, by Alan Swallow. Prairie Press, Muscatine, Ia.  
*The Proud People*, by Joseph Joel Keith. Wings Press, Mill Valley, Calif.  
*Brave Laughter*, by Arthur Guiterman. Dutton.  
*Tears*, by Angelica Balabanoff. E. Laub Pub. Co., N. Y. C.  
*Emociones tendidas al sol*, by Angelica Ferrari de Plaza. Montevideo, Uruguay.  
*The Collected Poems of William Alexander Percy*. Knopf  
*The Stone Ants*, by Hubert Creekmore. Ward Ritchie Press, Los Angeles.  
*In Narrow Bound*, by Ann Stanford. Alan Swallow, Gunnison, Col.  
*Who Dare To Live*, by Frederick B. Watt. Macmillan.  
*Winter Solstice*, by Gerald Bullett. Macmillan.  
*Agua Suelta*, by Marigloria Palma. Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, San Juan, P. R.

- East of Bridgewater and Other Poems*, by Ann Batchelder. Dutton.  
*Kottabos*, by Zaida Packard Edwards. Bruce Humphries, Boston.  
*Between Me and Thee*, by Eduard Jordan. William-Frederick Press, N. Y. C.  
*A Little Book of Casual Verse*, by Arthur Frederic Otis. Normandie House, Chicago.  
*An Audience*, by Osmond Beckwith. Mangin Press, N. Y. C.  
*Sonnet to a Soldier*, by Herbert Anderson. Pvt. ptd.  
*Wunxston Junction*, by Herbert Anderson. Pvt. ptd.  
*Dawn to Dusk*, by J. C. Cunningham. Pvt. ptd. Ames, Ia.  
*Of Bitter Grapes*, by Emery E. Petho. Bruce Humphries.  
*A Quiet Road*, by William Arnette Wofford. Harbinger House, N. Y. C.  
*Skyways*, by Rosa Coates Richards. Fine Editions Press, N. Y. C.  
*The Years of the Whirlwind*, by Harry William Nelson. Pvt. ptd. Groton, Conn.  
*For Crossing Wide Waters*, by Hargis Westerfield. Driftwind Press. North Montpelier, Vt.  
*Torchlight*, by Powell Spring. Banner Press, Atlanta, Ga.  
*Fragile Armor*, by Frances Angevine Gray. Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Ia.  
*Abigail's Sampler and Other Poems*, by Helen Frith Stickney. Fine Editions Press.  
*American Rhymes*, by Ralph Francis Smith. Dorrance, Philadelphia.  
*Patriotic Thoughts of a Marine*, by PFC Roy E. Fries. Dorrance.  
*Steps of Youth*, by Bess Dickey. Dorrance.  
*Bilge Bubbles*, by "Cap'n Bob" Nolan. Dorrance.  
*Eulogy on America*, by Robert Solway. Handcraft Pub., Wellington, Australia.  
*Gracious Interlude*, by Lucille Key Thompson. Banner Press.  
*Pied Hiker*, by W. T. Shorthose. Royal Press, Longton, Eng.  
*Poems and Verses*, by Helen Parry Eden. Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, Wis.  
*Bouquet of Cheer*, by Kate Chidsey Strouse. Pvt. ptd.  
*Heart Wrought Filigree*, by Edythe Brehm. Pvt. ptd., San Antonio, Tex.
- NEW EDITIONS, TRANSLATIONS, ANTHOLOGIES AND PROSE.
- Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau*, ed. by Carl Bode. Packard, Chicago.  
*Selected Poems of Federico Garcia Lorca*, trans. by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili. New Hogarth Library, London.  
*Selected Verse Poems of Arthur Rimbaud*, trans. by Norman Cameron. New Hogarth Library.  
*The Book of New Poems, 1943*, ed. by Oscar Williams. Howell, Soskin.  
*The Book of Canadian Poetry*, ed. by A. J. M. Smith. Univ. of Chicago Press.  
*Twelve Spanish American Poets*, ed. by H. R. Hays. Yale Univ. Press.  
*New Road, 1943*, ed. by Alex Comfort and John Bayliss. Grey Walls Press, Billericay, Essex, Eng.

# P O E T R Y

## A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

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VOL. LXIII

NO. III

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### TWO POEMS

#### MEDITATION AS EPITAPH

(The great Chinese actor, Mei Ling Fan, was murdered by the  
Japanese in the summer of 1943)

*For Dunstan Thompson*

1.

THE tiger mangles an era, leaps  
From the far provinces of hate  
To where, like a fountain, tradition keeps  
Its slow musical discipline.  
But over the pastoral silence, fate  
Watches the tiger, anguish in ambush,  
And is unmoved. O now from that sin  
Of mirror magic, how extricate  
Mercy? Trained spiders, skined in our lush  
Alexandrian culture, the cruel web

Of art holds us, while through the air  
Whistling with omens, the tiger lair  
Is dangerously deserted. It is the ebb  
Tide of beauty. The dirty shore  
Exposes our tracks, easy to follow.  
And out of ambush comes that fellow  
We denied, the joke, the more  
Than murderous, blood at the teeth,  
Hot for the kill. What have we now  
As ransom—will he pause for wreath  
Of laurel, snickersnee fondle a flower  
Of artifice. It is not enough.  
The delusive barrier falls to his anger.  
Eras bulge and vanish in the tough  
Pocket of his huge hunger.

2.

One dies or another. It  
Is all the same. Bloody hands  
Rip the beautiful flesh, wit  
Squeaks like a scared mouse. Jazz bands  
Hesitate for a requiem, then play  
Faster and faster, while disaster  
Overtakes and conquers our last day.  
It is the hour of blood. Christ  
Crucified, like a vision, stammers  
In the dreams of the good. But most are lost,  
And the ominous harmony of hammers

Pounding nails through the hands, brings  
 Not high heaven closer, but pain  
 Only. Then see how the shriveled life clings  
 To breath, searching immortality  
 In the grey unemotional sky.

## 3.

So he is poisoned in the red chamber,  
 Who was the master of his art,  
 So must they perish whose chosen parish  
 Was beauty. They did not remember  
 How hate's sly animals chart  
 Death for the thoughtful. Their fault was the flourish,  
 Pride like a bandage, over their eyes.  
 It was not evil to exalt their art—  
 O, as they find themselves the prize  
 For gibbons—they do not forget,  
 Trace in the raging brute face  
 How death is victory and grace  
 For them, hear in the baffled cry  
 Their valued victory.  
 So he is poisoned in the red chamber,  
 While they quote minutes of delight.  
 But the darkness comes, the shining ember  
 Of success burns out. The world's night  
 Shudders to the violated sun.  
 Salvation, like a moth on a pin,  
 Gleams in the funeral gestures of a fan.

## 4

What was the fault, the terrible guilt  
 Impossible longer to evade?  
 Who knows? Who speaks? Who tells? Whose aid  
 Comes merciful? O, in the guilt  
 House, mandarins of miasma weep  
 Apologies. The apocalyptic sword  
 Hangs, like a grail out of reach, the word  
 Of absolution niched, not touched.  
 But at the last, is the lost hope  
 Recovered, the impoverished throat enriched  
 By one sudden revealing song?  
 For those who are killers do not kill.  
 Their tiger slashes rattle the flesh,  
 And pride comets in their glance.  
 But even, heiled heroes, as they dance  
 Onward, waving obsidian, the wish  
 Of the good kindles the dead eyelids.  
 The sightless eyes see caroling leaves,  
 Promise blooming on the bleeding lawn.  
 And more, O more, than the heart grieves,  
 Is death's no longer indifferent dawn.

## POEM IN TIME OF WAR

*For Howard Turner*

So make your passive passage to the act  
 Of violence, to the impossible deed.  
 Macduff you are, who were Mercutio,

And boy of words is boy of blood, and all  
Is a sea-change. I saw those boisterous waters come,  
Slapdash with our future up the shore,  
And in recession, tidal total, draw  
Like pebbles, the deluded beauty of the past.

Drown, drown, in the impersonal depths,  
While, on the green ceiling, tense tankers  
Catwalk gingerly toward their piers.  
Drown: drown: Le Cimetiere Marin,  
Thalassa, Debussy's throbbing orchestra,  
All the secluded symbols of our past,  
Excorticant by searchlight flare, drop masks,  
Present true faces in the racing tide.

For the war is everywhere, and like the sea,  
Flows over the beaches of illusion,  
Even resorts where crooks and poets kept  
Their beautiful secrecy; and like the sea  
Is resolute, but O, no resolution  
Brings, even to those who form their questions.  
For the war is everywhere, and like the sea,  
Death-giver, gives ambiguous utterance.

The sons are soldiers, the mothers remain as mourners.  
In the cafe by the harbor, sailors are spinning  
Their yarn, O form memorial webs for keepsake.  
And the tousled girls brighten their eyes with tears,  
And the gay music goes sour in the glasses,  
But everywhere is the war, roaring beyond



The dancers, like a surf, waiting, waiting,  
Low tide of the moment while the moon climbs higher.

And each of us is caught: poet or painter;  
The very rich; mother's invalid boy;  
The handsome athlete; the sad refugee;  
O all, friends and lovers, are passengers  
Into the ambient tidal twilight. Land  
Of largesse is lost, and the dear particular face,  
Under the helmet, is friend or fatal face.

So make your impassive passage to the Act:  
Drown, drown, in the impersonal depths,  
For the war is everywhere and like the sea.  
The sons are soldiers; the mothers are mourners.  
And each of us is caught. Poet or painter,  
Under the helmet is friend or fatal face.

*William Abrahams*

## THE DOLLS

The dolls that by blue music move,  
Borne on the barroom's septic breath  
Beyond the loose piano's phrase  
Into the casual arms of death,

Project love's odor rank and bloom  
As perfect as an evening star  
To customary customers  
Itching and ogling at the bar.

They void the visual demand  
That makes their eyes so sparrow-bright  
With promise by the seeming ease  
With which they cancel appetite.

Unreconciled to future wrath  
They occupy each sad saloon,  
Doomed brides of dubious origin,  
Awaiting a predicted groom

Whose therapeutic hand shall serve  
To pacify these hollow heads  
And out of curiosity  
Adjust them to the marriage bed.

The acid and deliberate act  
That fabricates the bridal veil  
Will serve to substitute for sense  
When other histrionics fail.

*Nelson Del Bittner*

## THREE POEMS

### ON CHRISTMAS EVE

On Christmas Eve the sun shines like the summer:  
On Christmas Eve I see the evergreens  
Stand tall and living where the rest are dead,  
Bare branches waiting for the breath of spring.

On Christmas Eve the sky is blue as summer,  
The evergreens are tall and thick with life.  
And in the others lies the germ of leaf,  
Which we too wait, an end of suffering.

Time was when Christmas meant a peal of bells,  
Across the suffering world to tell of joy,  
And Christmas Eve was eve of miracle,  
Eve of the virgin birth and the live boy.

On Christmas Eve this year I hold the sun  
As witness to the brightness that will follow,  
And may my daughter, born seven months, be one  
To share the rare dispersal of our sorrow.

### CHILDREN GATHERING FLOWERS

Small words permit the gathering of flowers,  
The touch of hands upon the stalk, the colors,  
The pride in bursting bouquets, larger than  
Small fingers can control. The meadows shine

With green children, with blue and perfect blooms,  
With pink nursemaids, dresses flowing, and winds  
Curling about the airs, the sweet, bright airs.

There is a charm in children and in flowers.  
No gathering of gold or love, no picking  
Of choicest delicacies, fruits and sweets,  
Of choicest ladies, breasts and lips and hair,  
No such accumulation can compare  
In honesty. The children have an air  
Of summer. It is in the hand. It is  
The clearest honesty, the merest act,  
A gay persuasion of children gathering flowers.

POETRY AS CLOVER

The skeleton, grey as a plover's egg,  
Smooths its poor fingers round the solid earth,  
The last enemy of death. The skeleton is  
The opposition of the poet's kiss,  
The time of clover-leaves, of meadows yellowing  
In the uncomfortable sun. It is the one  
Disaster we are most ashamed to make,  
The unforgiving light of love in death.

*Nicholas Moore*

## THIS OTHER PLANET

### THREE POEMS ON EXILE

#### I

Soldiers in trains with their unwieldy kits,  
Airmen with knapsacks and attaché cases  
In telephone booths and post offices, all the places  
That link up with their life as once they knew it—  
These are the obvious exiles, these returning  
From embarkation leave, half England churning  
Through crowded turnstiles to meet its fellow,  
To meet, and part with the little hollow  
Laugh that never deceives—yet what are these  
But ripples at the edge of enormous seas?  
The millions of Germans in Russia that have no leave,  
The millions of Russians, our armies in the East,  
The prisoners of war with their depressed  
And shabby replicas of life, the grave  
Family men who didn't want the war,  
And the young who loved at first sight, but love no more.

#### II

To drill raw verses on the sea-wet sand?  
This was a pleasant fancy in the days  
Before my exile; now I have no right  
To drill my toes or the fingers of my hand.  
I am enclosed, cribbed, cabined, and confined;

My body is no longer mine, my mind  
 So set to work on formal parrottries  
 No time or energy is left to be  
 The person I still like to think is me.  
 At the day's end of miserable toil  
 The bodily half-comfort in my power  
 Is to lie by the shore for half an hour  
 And watch the hostile waves on the wet sand;  
 To sleep, or dream, and dreaming, wake to find  
 The coated taste of exile on my tongue.

## III

This other planet, nearer than the moon,  
 Has nothing romantic about it, jagged mountains  
 Deep windy valleys, mossy fountains—  
 But these are for fighting over; you soon forget  
 Their rugged beauty and grandeur when you are wet  
 Through to the skin, and dragging a Lewis gun  
 Sideways along a cliff, or trying to run  
 Up a long slope with it; this afternoon  
 The wind swishes through the bracken, and I lie  
 And listen to the long-lash bullets whip by;  
 These are the alphabet, the primitive speech  
 Of this new planet; grenades and bullets teach  
 A man to lie flat and press his face in the mud  
 Or run till his eyes are full of the color of blood.

*R. N. Currey*

## TWO POEMS

### THREAT FOR SUBURBAN

In the morning the clock  
Is breaking its eggs, its spinnets,  
Its spiders rock in their wires,  
Its birds like bobbins.

Along the hedges, sheep-shape,  
Under the plane-trees  
April in their sticks  
Their thirty leaves hanging and the thumb-thick buds,  
He passes same as anyone,  
Calling the papers  
Like herrings or bottles.  
But the headlines  
Are taller than dolls.  
The paragraphs  
Like ironweeds.

Ho they approach  
By the bridge with the seventeen corridors:

The men in canisters  
The humped bulls and the iron workers.

They are crossing the causeway  
Under the trees of wires.  
Their guns are shining

Like sticklebacks,

                    Their guns are bawling  
Out of mouths as round as O's.

In the little houses that are more than half glass  
The barbers pray among the phonographs.

The coatsellers and the ticketers  
Ring all the drawstring bells.

The women

Count up the clockwise flowers, the pods of snails,  
Tell how to hide  
In the greenhouse

In the pear trees' riddle of twigs

Hurry hurry to bury the coins with the bitten edges.

And by night  
They lie in their beds  
Like graves or ridges.

Stare at the dark:

(The lantern skull,  
the pocket handful of bones.)

Under their ribs  
They feel the kettle hearts:  
Feel the blood stop  
In their bramblebush of veins.



All night over the gables  
They hear the hurl of knives or swallows.

O rise across the gate with the knuckle handle  
The dark as tall as junipers!

Between the chimney posts  
The moon is lifting its white and vacant hill.

#### ROAD TO CHICAGO

We passed the children crying tick-a-lock  
And writing their names with sticks.

The sun  
Was slanting across their faces like a kite.

Where are you going?  
They pushed back hair  
As bright as parasols.

Where?  
And they ran beside us  
Past the names on the letter boxes,  
Past the billboards  
With the faces as big as sheds:  
To the fingerposts  
Pointing in all directions to Chicago.

Oh walking the wintered cities  
Groaning like old gates  
we have followed the sorcerers

JEANNE MCGAHEY

With the braided beards.  
                                Their goat tongues cry  
In the gong stillness.

Dragging the carts  
 That are carved like cemeteries  
 (Oh beasts with the white eyes!)  
 We have counted the thousand stairs  
 With the water stains:

Of the old towers.                      The tilt-like slabs

The cornices  
With their crowns of fingers.

Oh children  
Heads that are blind and wider than terraces  
Loom from their cliffs of stones.

The forgotten words  
Are written with holes and arrows.

Oh children  
We are afraid of the dead with their bracelet bones.

They laughed  
And gave us their dozen berries  
As black as birds.

*Jeanne McGahery*

## TWO POEMS

### WORLD AT NIGHT

Outward to the edge-rot of the stoop,  
Sheltered from northeast weather only by a loop  
Of woodbine  
Dry from leafmold to roof line,  
The grooved boards slope their curling grain  
To shed daylight and darkness, leather and rain.  
And where termites have made a board collapse,  
One curving-piece of the rocker taps  
In pensive slowness of rhythm to and fro.

The floor was nailed here seventy-odd years ago  
By hands that soon gripped roots in Chancellorsville—  
And are gripping them, though a little more vaguely, still.

It is night by three hours; a mongrel in the hollow  
Barks through dust of the last hot tires to follow  
The red road God knows where.  
The bark is languid, hanging like cobweb on air.  
But it broke off when the train screamed down the track;  
Train that goes night after night—never comes back—  
Whose sound suspends all sounds, even inward speech;  
Ubiquitous sound, beyond river, even beyond reach.

The sky is sick with a ragged tubercular lung  
Going to pieces in sallow light among  
The townward hills, whereunder pock-marked Greek  
Mixes onion in cow shank till his four walls reek.

That world is clockwise, and the clock is fast.  
His world is counterclockwise; time is past.  
The old man, rocking, knows it: Time is past. . . .

. . . Once a woman, smooth and white  
As porcelain, lay in the sumac and the night,  
Trembling as the brook trembled, speaking as the wind spoke,  
One shoulder, one thigh emphatic in clear moonlight.

THE LAND, THE LABOR

No longer pure black children chase each other  
At field's edge; nor the pure white fibers smother  
The even accordion pleats of pure gray loam.  
It is no longer home.

Topsoil that printed Afric-pure slave feet  
Is a South eroded, lost in river silt.  
The ground the croppers' twisted shoes now meet  
Is scuffed, pocked, alien shale where straggly wilt  
Is sure and fleet.

By God, what's wrong? Where is the quick prehensile  
Snatch of crowfoot hands on ice-white thaw?  
Is cotton X'd by the New York gambler's pencil,  
Georgia sloth, U-boats, and skewy law?

I tell you it has come to many evils:  
Swindling, sharecropping, dead land, war, and weevils.

O South, O South, there's plenty gone pure rotten,  
But it's not pure black, pure white, and not pure cotton.

*LeGarde S. Doughty*

## T W O P O E M S

### PASTORALE

He had forgotten that he ought to worry  
Watching the mouse beside the shock of corn,  
Hearing the hens scuff, and one hedge-bird trill.  
He'd never noticed that a mouse was flat and fat,  
Only seen trouble when he saw the tan scurry.  
Then in that distance where anything's a speck  
He felt the high hover of a taloned menace  
And wished that it were night, the perching time,  
Time for descent beneath the corn to nests,  
Wanted to scare the mouse he ought to hate  
Into the ripe shock of corn. Instead  
He left it to the hawk, and hatched the hens,  
Taking home his want for dark, his want to be  
Old and safe as a turtle, blind as a toe.  
Instead, he kissed his wife and skimmed the milk.

### THE CYCLONE

Day upon day after work  
Like putting children to bed  
The barren clerk and his wife  
Read in the paper what  
The meters of climate were thought  
To mean by their sinister change;  
For miles about, as far  
As their highest fear could see,

The strange air hung in clots:  
Their safety merged like a cloud  
With a blue anxiety.  
The cyclone came by night  
Like love, expected, but strange,  
And all they could do was watch  
While their whole house fell in.

*George P. Elliott*

### THE CIRCLE

We come to childhood after all our work  
Of going up and down the roads of men;  
In ignorance perhaps we take the fork  
Leading to simplicity again.

We recognize a house, a field, a fence:  
This is the country, this is where we played!  
We meet the landscape that a child's glance  
Photographed on all our light and shade.

Again the glow like gas-flame of the sky  
Trembles above the hills we always knew,  
And though the morning long ago was dry  
We trace our early steps across the dew.

*Elizabeth Bohm*

## LE TEMPS RETROUVÉ

Those hours that like **fruits**  
Were shared, the taste of **them**  
In your mouth as in mine, rough skin and honeyed pulp and juice  
Like a young wine;  
Walking past houses of strangers,  
Remarking the bright knocker  
On the blue door, or through the park in leaf, the park again  
That wore its winter **burden**, or  
Watching the river as it flowed  
Away from us: each hour was  
To hold, to part, to eat  
Down to the stony core.  
Not twice, the wise Greek said, you dip in the same stream.  
Not twice, save with the eyes,  
You feast upon one fruit, except it be in a dream  
Where flesh is shadowy and savor but a ghost.  
In memory the **bitter stone**  
Is but half known, is lost.  
The river flows away  
We do not share  
Reality or dream,  
The bloomy plum, the autumn-colored pear,  
The richest peach those hours offered seem  
Such fruits as never hung upon an earthly tree,  
Nor ever laid delight upon the tongue.  
And yet like music that once played is over  
But that the mind  
After recovers, this unfooled heart

Calls back times past, feeds on that ghostly fruit,  
Marveling only how it may  
Seem partly sweet, though now  
Not to be shared.  
All that we have together  
Being the river that has flowed away.

*Babette Deutsch*

MEMORY OF AN EVENING FOX

What judgment could I speak  
To a sudden evening fox  
Encountered among rain and rocks,  
In an hour bluish and bleak,  
With both of us out to seek

Appeasement according to need:  
He for hunger, I for grief —  
Why should I judge him thief  
And brand his motive illicit greed,  
Knowing us both of exile breed?

He stopped for query, I to stare  
At copper shaped to dripping fur.  
Immobile in rain's saddened blur,  
Each gave to each implicit share  
Of deference that exiles bear.

*Israel Smith*



## FOUR POEMS

### "MORNING OR MIDNIGHT, THE SAME HOUR"

Morning or midnight, the same hour  
requiring no telegram,  
no double rap on the door;

no drama at all. Slow,  
like getting drunk on wine,  
or early evening snow;

when the whole careful scene goes down  
past the unbudgeted sea.  
I try my best to drown

under the bursting green,  
but always my arms flail out.  
Dripping, I rise again,

in the dry room the guilty pool spreads wide;  
I beg to explain,  
but no one asks why I died.

### HOME TOWN

Where are the evil broomstick and the narrow pointed hat  
that trembling you ran from to the warm wide city?  
Those gossip claws and the bigoted beady eyes  
tried to throttle you here; in the nick of time  
you tricked them by the clicking outbound train . . . !

Now cold from the city you come: the witch has died.  
Or was she never alive? Broomstick and brimstone have disappeared;  
what could you ever have feared from this motherly lap,  
the nodding cap, and milk-soft eyes under the mild sun?  
Why did you even think of running away?

Here where no one locks the door at night,  
you need no clock or calendar. Scientist, take note;  
the parallel lines have met; infinity,  
that glistening slippery eel, is trapped within the net  
of Main Street, heavy dinner, family photographs.

You do not criticise. Deliberately blind  
to the chromium drug store and all the tall signs of war;  
everything is level with before. The Supermarket lies,  
only the Latin Prize is real, and will your long pants fit  
or be laughed at as they stammer through the dance?

When you left, you knew the town was done for now.  
How could it carry on without your bookstrap,  
private nook in the tree, and your spy-code look  
for the freckled redheaded boy who lived next door?  
Your teacher would weep, never teach another class . . .

. . . she reads along in the same bee-droning tone.  
Shakespeare is happy to be deaf and dead.  
Surely that wooden desk still holds inside  
your molding candy crumbs, your paper aeroplane;  
even the blackboard is there, waiting on your chalky word!

What are you going to write, white and firm,  
on that mammoth world of slate? Eternal 2 and 2:  
now you are grown, make known the magic sum of Fate.  
Begin! the blackboard urges. Your turn, you must take your turn!  
*I have come back to tell you, I have come to say—*

*—I have returned, that is—you beg for teacher's help.*  
She throws away the prompting book and holds  
the smarting ruler steady. *Well*, ruler is ready to crack,  
*what have you learned?* The chalk burns in your hand;  
the fire does not warm, you cannot write a word.

The sum, the magic sum! Flame flickers out,  
dies down to dumbest ash, gray so gray. Cold so cold.  
And old so very old. . . . Old as that crone  
who snatched at the little boy and could not catch him then.  
Now he is caught. So much you have been taught.

#### THE COWARD

You, weeping wide at war, weep with me now.  
Cheating a little at peace, come near  
and let us cheat together here.

Look at my guilt, mirror of my shame.  
Deserter, I will not turn you in,  
I am your trembling twin.

Afraid, our double knees lock in knocking fear.  
Running from the guns, we stumble upon each other.  
Hide in my lap of terror; I am your mother.

Only two, and yet our howling can  
encircle the world's end.  
Frightened, you are my only friend.

And frightened, we are everyone.  
Someone must make a stand.  
Coward, take my coward's hand.

#### BROTHER

First bike and doll  
were wall.

You were not my brother when  
we were eight and ten.  
King of the Chemical Set,  
Ace of the Model Plane;  
you were Tom Swift and Hairbreadth Harry,  
hero I should some day marry.  
 Lover, but never brother.

Then fence  
of adolescence.

When childhood was done  
you became my son.  
Knickerbocker teens,  
I knew trousers of twenty;  
dressing for college dance,  
you were still in knee-pants.  
Mother, but never brother.

Now age has leveled all  
that former wall.

Laughing, look back from our open plain.  
Weeping, the walls remain,  
too high to scale,  
too low to crawl beneath.  
Not lover or mother  
but stranger to each other.  
When will I call you brother?

*Eve Merriam*

## ON YOUR RADIO TONIGHT

In a thousand homes a thousand  
Brass pianos cluck the keys.  
Above, Orion stalks the strands  
And Scorpio crawls through starry seas.

The house, roaring, shaking on its earth,  
Strains its metal mouth and wails.  
The listeners, crouched to share its mirth,  
Gash their faces with their nails.

Wild honey and locusts nourished John  
As he watched the shifting stars and signs.  
The Word in the desert struck at dawn  
The Baptist, with lightning in his spine.

Thus the whirling prophet roared  
In the wilderness; the Star appeared.  
And writhing in its bloody core  
To take the seed, Earth's flesh was seared.

*Joseph Bennett*

## TWO POEMS

### THE TROPHY

The wise king dowered with blessings on his throne,  
The rebel raising the flag in the market place,  
Haunt me like figures on an ancient stone  
The ponderous light of history beats upon,  
Or the enigma of a single face  
Handed unguessed, unread, from father to son,  
As if it dreamt within itself alone.

Regent and rebel clash in horror and blood  
Here on the blindfold battlefield. But there,  
Motionless in the grove of evil and good,  
They grow together and their roots are twined  
In deep confederacy far from the air,  
Sharing the secret trophy each with other;  
And king and rebel are like brother and brother,  
Or father and son, co-princes of one mind,  
Irreconcilables, their treaty signed.

### TO THE OLD GODS

Old gods and goddesses who have lived so long  
Through time and never found eternity,  
Fettered by wasting wood and hollowing hill,  
  
You should have fled our ever-dying song,  
The mound, the well, and the green trysting tree.  
They have forgotten, yet you linger still.

Goddess of caverned breast and channeled brow,  
And cheeks slow hollowed by millennial tears,  
Forests of autumns fading in your eyes,

Eternity marvels at your counted years  
And kingdoms lost in time, and wonders how  
There could be thoughts so bountiful and wise

As yours beneath the ever-breaking bough,  
And vast compassion curving like the skies.

*Edwin Muir*

## PLAY

I live in a barrack I drew as a child,  
Chalked it on blackboards and labeled it Home;  
I drew in a field where soldiers filed,  
I drew in a ship and her guns and her foam.

I fight a great war that I fought as a child,  
Mimicked the sniper, the shot and the fall;  
Now I'm a veteran, weary and wild,  
And here I go storming the garden wall.

*W. W. Gibson*



## CHRISTMAS TREE

(Australia, 1942)

Because the tree is joyous and as a child  
Lovely in posture, fresh as wind to smell,  
Bearing clear needles like a coat of hair,  
    And is well-combed and always mild,  
    And stands in time so well,  
And strong in the forest or beside a tomb  
Looks over time and nature everywhere—  
Lift it up lightly, bring it in the room.

And for the adoring man, and long ago  
The adoring man who was obscure and clean,  
Bring in the tree and stand it on the block.  
    He felt that he was free to go;  
    He stood beneath the green.  
Going was freedom, freedom under the tree,  
Freedom before the third crow of the cock,  
And life exchanged to keep his freedom free.

Summer is sweet because it brings outside  
The warmth of houses and the heated air;  
We lie on grass as on a delightful rug.  
    Christmas brings winter like a bride  
    Indoors with white to wear.  
The tree looks normal in the house; it grows  
Swiftly into the floor; the children hug  
This visitor with his dark and pretty clothes.

Silver and gold and mirror-bright and red,  
Now hang the egg-shell baubles on the bough  
With tinsel hair as shimmering as a dress,  
    And one white star upon his head,  
    Proud as a Roman now;  
And toys, the miniature instruments of pride,  
Lay underneath with packages to bless  
The material kingdom of the eternal bride

Between the acquisition and the prayer  
These stand more human for the common days:  
The fir, the family, and the pungent wreath  
    And one poinsettia like a crimson flare.  
    I think the history of praise  
Is central in this present-flowering green  
That breathes on little children underneath  
And keeps them like the infant Nazarene.

*Karl J. Shapiro*

## JAMES THURBER: THE COMIC PRUFROCK

IT WAS on an evening in the late spring of 1938, at a banquet at the University of Chicago, while crawling around on my hands and knees under the speakers' table looking for Ford Madox Ford's glasses, that I first knew I was going to write an article on Thurber. It was a moment of murk and strain: I remember the women just standing there, and getting in my hair, most of which hung over one eye. I suppose there have been occasions when I looked even more like a Thurber drawing; but there has been none when I felt more like one. I have had this queer feeling of looking like a Thurber drawing on four distinct occasions in my life, counting the evening I failed to find Ford Madox Ford's glasses—or "glosses" as he said when he promptly singled me out from among the group of intellectuals as probably the ideal man to whom to report the loss of spectacles. The other times were. once when turning around to glare at a woman talking behind me at a concert; once while crawling around on the floor of a cold garage looking for a cotter pin while the neighbor lady whose car I was presumably going to fix when I found it, hung around; and once reciting "No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist wolf'sbane" in a drug store to a girl who I found had turned to the menu.

I am not sure what poetic sensitivity is, but I am practically certain Thurber has got it. This is a magazine of verse, and critics especially, with their bootlegger's passion for boundaries, will probably thank me to get back in my territory. But though artists work in different forms there is a contemporary tissue which connects them, and the things they have in common spiritually are greater than the differences among them technically.

And we shall not have to stray afield at all in this brief glance at Thurber's work; for he has more in common with modern poets than, for instance, he has with any other present-day humorist you might mention.

I do not know whether the critical landlords of Axel's Castle—our customary symbol for Symbolism—list him among the occupants or not, or whether they are aware he is on the premises. It is that house (to call a partial roll) through whose silences can be heard the interminable scratching of the pen of Proust, and the sad sound of his cough. Here Prufrock, lost in the fumes of introspection, lay damned in the late afternoon. From its window Yeats saw the centaur stamp in the black wood, and Joyce labored mightily in its towers. If fancy and the imagination and "subjective" as opposed to "objective" reality is the emphasis we are talking about, then Thurber can certainly be included. The filaments of individual sensibility are seldom more sharply wrought, or more constantly manifest, than in his work. The psychological nuance is rarely more intricately drawn, even in those tidy sketches in which he is reducing it to absurdity. His inner states and private convolutions are, if not as profound, as skilfully projected as any. He may be least of the family—indeed perhaps just a quizzical lodger cutting up in some remote corner of the premises—but this is the address all right.

It is hard to think of anyone who more closely resembles the Prufrock of Eliot than the middle-aged man on the flying trapeze. This preoccupied figure is Prufrock's comic counterpart, not in intensity of course, but in detail. There is, for instance, the same dominating sense of Predicament. The same painful and fastidious self-inventory, the same detailed anxiety; the same immersion in weary minutiae, the same self-disparagement, the

same wariness of the evening's company. And the same fear, in summary, that someone—in Thurber's case a brash halfback or maybe even a woman—will "drop a question on his plate." Prufrock, taking stock of himself, concludes that he is no Prince Hamlet, "nor was meant to be"; is merely one who will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two.

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—

Almost, at times, the Fool.

Thurber tells us that he is no Lord Jim, nor any character whatever out of Conrad. Among the southern seas none guessed his minor doom, though he sat in tropical cafes twitching his jaw muscles, in the attempt to look inscrutable. Prufrock in his lush fantasies "heard the mermaids singing, each to each." And concludes, "I do not think that they will sing to me." Among the seductive islands Thurber found no Tondelaya, or any facsimile thereof, offering to go to pieces with him. Of the women he is terse:

They tried to sell me baskets.

If Eliot symbolizes his spiritual intricacies in terms of mythological beings, so that we get the Eumenides lurking, at last, behind a curtain in an English drawing room, Thurber can personify his own modest nemeses in figures as concrete, always afraid he is "being softly followed by little men padding along in single file, about a foot and a half high, large-eyed and whiskered." This ability to project the fanciful enables him to get pretty much the effect of poetry itself, sometimes. Just as there is much formal verse that has no poetry (as that of the contributor who rebuked me for rejecting poems which, as he pointed out, had fourteen lines of faultlessly Petrarchan con-

struction, under the impression that he had sonnets whereas all he had was Venetian blinds) so poetry can sometimes be contained in the vessel of prose. Elizabeth Madox Roberts often created an effect of poetry in her novels, and William Faulkner occasionally achieves it when he is not going haywire. The banquet I mentioned stands out in my memory for one other thing. It is a phrase in Carl Sandburg's talk: "Those who write the poetry of an age, whether in verse or prose . . ." Enough. If poetry is an essence produced by the discharge of the contents of the Leyden jar of the nervous system (and it most certainly is not but at this point we want one of those definitions which serve chiefly to prove that poetry can't be defined) then Thurber has produced poetry in at least a few cases. Poetry is where you find it, and I find it in *The Black Magic of Barney Haller*, one of the best of those exquisite little sketches which see more drafts than many poems. You will remember it as the account of the caretaker whom storms follow home, whom Thurber suspects of trafficking with the devil and exorcises by incantations of Frost and Lewis Carroll.

The title of Eliot's poem is ironic—it is a "love song." It is certain that Prufrock never got around to asking his lady the question: the masculinity of this parched sophisticate seems specifically inoperative. In that other landmark of Eliot's early period, *The Portrait of a Lady*, the female is roundly satirized, but the narrator is singularly unable to cope with her; there is a "sensation of being ill at ease." Is there a sensation of which Thurber has given more repeated illustration? The oppressed narrator of Eliot's poem has the feeling, after climbing the stairs, of having "mounted on my hands and knees." One can imagine what Thurber would have done with *that*, had he included it in

his series in which he illustrated famous poems. It will be observed that in all of the instances in which I felt like a Thurber drawing there were women around—behind me, in front of me, and, most of all, above me. What contemporary disquiet has he caught here?



The woman satirized in *The Portrait of a Lady* was trite, but she was alive and certainly operating conversationally, and the women lam-

pooned in Thurber are alive and operating too, at their worst when they are a little too much like the preoccupied men (like the woman who came up and announced to the man shrinking in the chair: "I have a neurosis"), at their best possessing a certain virility lacking in the male. They perch confidently on the arms of sofas, drag their men to bridge parties, drive cars well, are in the embalming game. The male is on the wane, corroded with introspection, deflated by all his own inefficient efficiency, without "strength to force the moment to its crisis," his love lyric in desuetude. There is a sketch in which Thurber does not want to go some place—out some place, perhaps a bridge party or something like that—and he says he would rather stay home. "That's the place for a man to be anyhow—home." It is not a long step from there to: "A man's place is in the home."

Anybody who would rather not throw a javelin because Babe Didrikson could probably throw it farther, which is one of Thurber's reasons, is in a bad way. In *The Case Against Women* Thurber lists the reasons why he hates them, not, of course, that we don't, by this time, know. The boneless batter of the famous drawings is of course a caricature; but a caricature of a sharp contemporary sensation. Maybe it is only the first bug-eyed be-

wilderment of man startled and dazed by the little helpmeet's first brisk emergence into the wide world. It is to be hoped that such is the case and that the notorious Thurber male, subsiding, in bed and chair and at last on the rug, in various postures of anthropoid humiliation, is not a preview of the shape of things to come.

There is another possible construction on the matter, intimated by Thurber himself, which, though not rich in consolation, is a little more palatable to the male. Thurber qualifies the often echoed forecast that we are going to pot, with the specification that man will go first. The cities in which he has so long conducted his business, contrived his morals and debauched his politics, and in which he has now grown futilely introspective, are to be taken over by the praying mantis and the steppe cat. But before that there will be an interlude in which the women will be in there pitching. That dwindling masculine first person singular who has not written a single amorous poem nearly as good as the famous "love song" in which Prufrock never got anywhere, will be in circumstances over which it were perhaps better not to speculate in too great detail. But woman's emergence, now patent, can be expected to go on apace. She is already everywhere in industry; she is in Congress, on the pulpit and, as has been noted, in the embalming game—standing ready to commit us to the earth. Women live longer, too. Studying the newspaper accounts of forty-three people who got to be more than a hundred, Thurber notes that thirty-seven are women and six men, and four of them were written about because they died. And the women were reported as having celebrated the day by chinning themselves, riding in airplanes and performing other feats too depressing to mention. The female's retention of vigor, straight-



forwardness and the positive values is, perhaps, quite logical; for is she not more directly and intimately the custodian of life? It is Molly Bloom who closes the incredibly elaborate *Ulysses*, pulling the whole business back down to earth.

"The poet of *The Waste Land*," writes Edmund Wilson, "is living half the time in the real world of contemporary London and half the time in the haunted wilderness of medieval legend." Thurber too is half the time God knows where. "One's head may be stored with literature but the heroic prelude of the Elizabethans has ironic echoes in modern London streets and modern London drawing rooms." Reality in Thurber undergoes filterings and transmutations as curious and as abrupt. He deflates famous poems with cruelly literal illustrations, achieving bathos as jolting as Eliot's:

When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
Paces about her room again, alone,  
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts a record on the gramophone.

Confronted by details, moments, of that dull environment with which he is long weary of coping, he contrives his own little substitutions, and his transformer is always at work altering, to suit his fancy, the currents of experience. With characteristic self-deploration he admits to the inanity of many of the oddments that "slip by the guardian at the portal of his thoughts," but vouches for their tenacity. Thus

A message for Captain Bligh  
And a greeting to Franchot Tone!

sung to a certain part of *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*, occupied him for some time. A connoisseur of mispronunciation, he was happy when the colored woman called the ice-box "doom shaped," thus investing it with a quality which fascinated him for days,

and by a similar alchemy exercised by Barney Haller, the caretaker already mentioned, there are warbs in the garrick, grotches in the wood and fletchers on the lawn—all details possessing a charm with which their real-life counterparts cannot compete. To make the transformation complete, the maid has only to step on his glasses. Then do the flags of South American republics fly over the roofs of Manhattan banks, cats cross the street in striped barrels, old women with parasols walk through the sides of trucks, bridges rise “lazily into the air like balloons.” “The kingdom of the partly blind,” he assures us, jesting of his affliction, “is a little like Oz, a little like Wonderland, a little like Poictesme.” He never drives alone at night “out of fear that I might turn up at the portals of some mystical monastery and never return.” He has but to do that, and the parallel with Eliot is complete.

Now all these qualities in Thurber serve to illustrate again this fact: that attitudes, details, elements, are intimated in poetry before they are widely apparent in the general contemporary consciousness, or in popular literature. The truly original poet is often prescient. Swinging the classics, as our jazz bands now do, the fluid technique of shuttling arbitrarily between the past and the present without transition, as Broadway’s biggest recent hit does, our pleasure in mimicry, all these and so many other things mentioned in this discussion of Thurber, and also intangible qualities which are part of the general spiritual climate of our time, all these were contained and foreshadowed in a single poem which was called senseless when it first came out, and is still called senseless by people who: dance to the swung classics, titter at illustrations in which famous poems are deflated, pack the theater where *The Skin of Our Teeth* is presented, and listen to radio programs put together in montage and in which transitions

into stream of consciousness are effected with nothing more than a filter mike. Poetry is sometimes an antenna by which the race detects actualities at which it has not quite arrived.

The contempt of the man with both feet on the ground for the artist with one of them in fantasy, is familiar. See how you end up? You get farther and farther from reality, till you finally get simply in a state of whatayamacallit—schizophrenia. That's what modern artists are, high class schizophrenics. The answer is of course, simply, what do you mean by reality; and the point is an important one. I referred, with rather loose whimsicality I suppose, to Thurber as jester in Axel's Castle, and his work may be a rivulet running "individual sensibility" off into a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* — not that some of the serious exponents of Symbolism haven't already done so. But whatever the excesses of Symbolism may have been, it has not only made a notable contribution to modern literature but by its emphasis on subjective experience has helped us to a richer idea of what "reality" is. Just as poetry and profit are where you find them, reality is what you make it. The angle of refraction according to the perceiving psyche is *always* there, and the individual's extracting from the world round about him constitutes an experience that is itself a reality; a point which modern artists have been trying to make for over a generation. It is to be admitted that Symbolism, falling prey to another of our many false dualisms in its reaction to Naturalism, has sometimes gone to excesses, but we may hope, as Edmund Wilson suggests, that something of a healthier balance will be derived from a synthesis of the two.

To get back a moment, before closing, to Thurber, whom we have left peering into the abyss, on all fours no doubt. We do

not know that art and life will continue in the direction which he, in his peculiar way, has brought to such sharp emphasis. We do not know how events and literature, in their endless and intricate interaction, will condition the man of tomorrow, whether to more evaporating introversions or to new expansions. We know that the large pendulum which enables us to tick our little ticks, keeps swinging. Prophecy is an easy and a dangerous thing, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. And as to women, if the Curtain is one day coming down, well, Thurber's own prediction that they will outlast men only bears out once more the fact that men, more sensitive organisms, are pioneers in everything, even decline. And we need not vex ourselves with the illusion that the sexes were ever anything but opposed (the literature Thurber might illustrate going back to Genesis—"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."), nor face our future oppressed by the extraneous consideration that it will be survived by gnats.

P. D.

## R E V I E W S

### THE AMERICAN SEARCH

*Western Star*, by Stephen Vincent Benét. Farrar and Rinehart.

There are those who condemn modern poetry as wilfully difficult, despairing, elusive. Others condemn much modern poetry for being mere statement, lacking imaginative tension and the iron of irony. Both are wrong. There is a sense in which the whole argument is a needless exercise of pens and tempers. For

if there is anything one should want of his country, and above all when it is a country of diverse landscape and people, it is an art of diversity. Cold Lake Winnepesaukee and burning Mojave. T. S. Eliot (and not simply where he gives the illusion of being simple); Robert Frost (and not merely where he approximates the metaphysical).

Stephen Vincent Benét's death was a particular loss because he added to the variety of American poetry. His contribution of the historical narrative was unique, since few practised it and no other approached his success. It is important to define his effort. He was not interested in mouthing the word "America." Nor was his praise that blind rhapsody of a nation intended, by celebrating the poet's nationality, to celebrate the poet. Benét's deep regard for the U.S.A. was based not on a feeling of blood and earth, but on an honest belief in this country as remarkably permitting human freedom. He knew the misery and corruption, and you'll find them in his books. But, stronger than any other motive, you will find Benét's fascination with the effort of these states to be a place where that reckless and distorted word "liberty" actually means individual right and intellectual exemption.

*Western Star* is the opening book of what was to have been a long narrative of the westward movement in America, from the first landing to the end of the frontier in 1890. It concerns a group of Englishmen, their women and children, their various lives in early seventeenth-century England and their various fates in the new world. The book's verbal intention, human attitudes, structure of event and historical sense are similar to those of *John Brown's Body*.

The basic problem in this kind of poetic narration is to locate

a verse form flexible enough to admit a great multiplicity of material—known historical facts, violent action, dialogue, speculative summary — and yet tight enough to retain the necessary minimum of tautness. Benét uses a fluent, loosened blank verse. There are times when it moves with a quick tension. There are more frequent times when it verges on the edge of prose. For the most part, it is an adequate instrument, the fundamental rhythm persisting even when it seems it will falter. To avoid monotony, the accounts of certain characters are related in rhymed couplets of four beats, but, as in the longer line, with considerable variation in the total number of syllables. There are also short sections in stanza and in a free line which depends on a lax cadence for its cohesion. This is from the Invocation and is a just sample:

Now, in full summer, by the eastern shore,  
Between the seamount and the roads going West,  
I call two oceans to remember them.  
I fill the hollow darkness with their names.

The strength of the book—and it is the strength of everything Benét wrote—is in the warmth and vigor of the human feeling. There is a crowd of people in this book, and the degree to which each is particularized is surprising. Always there is the conviction that the act of expressing history means little unless it ends in a human image, and the act of expressing poetry means little unless it works through mortal object, through used, known, touched, feared, accustomed detail

*Western Star* is so obviously only an introduction that a review of it can hardly be more than introductory. In a day of the concentrated line and compressed lyric, it is proper to have a fair quantity of poetry that is genial, expansive and narrative. When so much verse is allusive (rightly and richly so) it is excellent to

have some whose taste in the mouth is plain, concrete, unmistakable.

Children are in this book with an exceptionally natural ease, and women bearing children with the natural pain. The flaws are of the word and not the poet, if such a distinction is possible in an art where the poet can be known only through the word. There was too ready an acceptance of the vocabulary that came too readily to the tongue. But always, beyond the verbal fault, is the small, living, warm texture of the years of men, and over all the vast conception of the westward motive. The result is a book which expands the types of our poetry. This is no small virtue.

The book continues and prolongs the American search for a home and an emblem. There are many who share that need for integration and who live out that impulse toward fixity. This is their book. This is Benét's voice:

I call upon the sorrow of the forest,  
I name the places where the blood was shed,  
And, for the hours when the need was sorest,  
The brokenhearted camps of no return  
Where the wood smoldered and the water stank  
And the forgotten wound began to burn  
As the sick men divided the last bread,  
I set the token by the riverbank,  
I scatter the cornmeal for the great dead.

*Paul Engle*

## FEARING AND THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

*Afternoon of a Pawnbroker*, by Kenneth Fearing. Harcourt Brace.

There has been no one in recent years as dramatic, direct, picturesque and entertaining in commenting on American city life as Kenneth Fearing. With the publication of his new volume of poems the reader is more aware of this than of the fact that he began his writing career as the most vivid exponent of socialism in poetry. The satirical explosions that characterized his early work are subsiding. He is neither as sharp nor as flashing as he was. It is not that he is less a poet, for he may be closer to the nature of poetry than ever before, but that the impelling force of his poetry has changed.

When Fearing's *Collected Poems* was published several years ago he appended his own definition of poetry: "The idea underlying my poetry . . . is that it must be exciting; otherwise it is valueless. To this end it seemed to me necessary to discard the entire bag of conventions and codes usually associated with poetry and to create instead more exacting forms which, in all cases, are based on the material being written about. Besides being exciting, I think that poetry necessarily must be understandable." This apparently simple statement precipitates a great many more questions than it answers. What does he mean by new exacting forms? It is true he dispensed with certain verse forms which had been popular, but others, notably Gertrude Stein and E. E. Cummings, had done this before him. If he had waved his hand in the air and insisted it was a poem, he would have had a juster claim, for he kept the essentials of the code of poetry which are words and imagination. After all, the form is only the



casing of a poem and always can be devised to suit the intention of the poet.

Then, what kind of excitement? Understandable to whom? There is the excitement of discovery, of speed, of food for the hungry, of love, the excitement of Coney Island, the excitement of perceiving a truth. Hundreds of poets from the earliest singers to Karl Shapiro have been and are exciting to thousands, perhaps millions, of people. Understanding is a matter of the audience to whom a poem is directed, which may be, in its widest sense, anyone who can read or even listen. Poetry may be intended for a race, as the Kalevala for the Finnish people, or, as in the writing of George Santayana, for a solitary reader. It is, however, primarily personal, for to recognize a poem is like looking in a mirror and seeing not your face but your soul.

What Fearing probably means is that he wants his poetry to have the instantaneous widespread effect of a newspaper headline. He wants as many people as possible to react with immediate horror or delight; consequently he has dramatized the most ordinary sights and happenings of every day living. What, then, is added to make it poetry and not mere reporting? Principally, it is Fearing's imaginative viewpoint. He has the double vision of the poet who sees the object we all see and sees at the same time its universal shadow. He observes in the continuous performance of a movie that the cycle of life and history may be likewise repetitious; in a juke box, the humble estate of being a man:

Its resourceful mind, filled with thoughts that range from love to grief,  
from the gutter to the stars, from pole to pole,  
Can seize its thoughts between fingers of steel,  
Begin at the start and follow them through in an orderly fashion to the  
very end.  
Can you do that?

With such a vision it is possible to use a particle of dust, or anything, as the subject, for it is the perception and communication which are important.

Fearing's power as a poet lies in these flashes of perspicacity and in his ability to transfer his perception into words. His weakness is that his perception is apt to be one-sided. Where is the evidence of nobility in the average man's day or year or life? It is not apparent on the surface Fearing portrays, yet anyone who is familiar with human beings knows it is there. He may have omitted such a significant, and necessary, trait because he has not completely overcome the singleness of outlook of the socially conscious group of writers and artists, of whom he was originally a part, who used their art as a means of pointing out the ills of society and of urging society to purge itself of those ills. Political poetry can be admirable and moving, but it is limited in its sphere and temporal in its communication.

There is no need for Fearing to be either, and he himself seems to be realizing this. Instead of poems in startling phrases about pickets, poison gas, fingers combing the city's refuse and spendthrift magnates, he is writing in a chimerical vein about live people haunting the dead, seers discussing the fate of the world and, vaguely, about business men and suburbanites. Happily he has retained his carnival humor. If he is not always as clear as he was in his previous books, it may be because his vision is changing and he is not certain himself of what he sees. Even his acid contempt for a prevailing injustice has mellowed to an admission that,

"Guilt," said John, "is always and everywhere nothing less than guilt."

*Ruth Stephan*

THE PURE ELIXIR, THE AMERICAN THING

*The American Way of Poetry*, by Henry W. Wells. Columbia University Press.

Mr. Wells has produced an interesting and useful book; he also sets an example in the practice of appreciative criticism on a socio-historical basis. To a casual glance this volume, for all its sprightly chapter headings, might seem but a chronological procedure through the "field" in the pedestrian cadence of a Monday-Wednesday-Friday lecture course, with that thoroughness minutely run wild called pedanticism. One careful reading of *The American Way of Poetry*, however, will show not only its judicious scholarship and relevant control of data but its abundance of discriminating insights and its nicely patterned, though strictly restrained, interpretation.

American poetry, according to this study, has taken and has made its own way. A brief introduction and a concluding chapter which elucidates the title define some indigenous qualities and dominant trends of our poetry viewed as an expression of the American spirit; sixteen intermediate chapters discuss, historically but in self-contained units, the work of representative poets from Freneau to Merrill Moore—with MacLeish's omission most conspicuous in the light of the book's main intent. Mr. Wells recognizes what Benét called diversity in the native muse, but tries to see our poetry linked and progressive in the "quick American light." Not that Mr. Wells is narrowly nationalistic or politically doctrinaire. Neither is he indifferent to that ultimate value, the poem's quality as a work of art, and the coincidence of such qualities in esthetic universals. He merely has chosen to limit his project, and to found a simple but significant

thesis on a careful examination of selected instances.

A primary theme concerns the language of American verse, in which Mr. Wells finds a "new sincerity" historically established. He admires Whittier's "frank reportorial spirit" in *Snow-bound*, and calls Moore's "dry and circumstantial realism" representative of our poetry from Freneau to Frost. Noting that Melville's verse was much closer to real speech than was his prose, Mr. Wells characterizes that native American language as "neither inflated, elegant, nor smooth but economical, virile, and rough . . . more imaginative than decorous, more forceful than speciously poetic." In modern American poetry a direct colloquialism is obvious; but by citing similar traits in our earlier literature, Mr. Wells establishes as a traditional and virile element what is sometimes disparaged by conventional criticism as a temporary lapse.

Regionalism is another and even more important theme in Mr. Wells' discussion. Emphasizing New England's priority, fecundity, and residual influence, it also remarks other poets in terms of other sections. Mr. Wells' sensitivity to geocultural atmospheres refines his interpretations of such artists as Robinson, Lindsay, and Ransom. Moreover, a close relation is implied between regionalism and realism, not only literary but philosophical. The pragmatism which Mr. Wells identifies in the American way of poetry may thus be related to sectionalism's concern with and responsibility to immediate facts; thus literary realism takes on the force of native habit, a social trait, by derivation from a pioneer dependence on the country, a subjection to climate and an ingenious use of resources. Mr. Wells recognizes too the decline of all separate regional influences as development and interchange create a wider national conscious-

ness, most vigorous in the Middle West. From our poetry past and present he derives a reasonably optimistic view of the American way of life, as vigorously progressive without sacrifice of original and decisive cultural elements. He seems to see the possibility of resolving democracy's social-individual paradox; American poetry, his study intimates, may become Whitman's song of self in mixed chorus, the voices of individual singers harmonized en masse by the love of a manly liberty held in common.

Historical interpretations are not, however, the outstanding aspects of Mr. Wells' book. Most emphatic and memorable are its paragraphs separately characterizing the work of various poets, not only as regionalists or as Americans, but also as unique artists. Mr. Wells' orderly analysis, with its awareness of roots, connections, and departures, makes the whole of American poetry a cultural frame of reference for distinguishing the inspired singularity in each poet's body of work. These perceptions Mr. Wells expresses with a power akin to poetry itself in its succinctness and illumination. Manifesting a genuinely philosophical estheticism, he has something of a Cazamian's critical ardor, but in a lean laconic way, American not Gallic. When he systematically describes Emily Dickinson's "frugality and infinity," he does a finished miniature with precise and feeling strokes of epigram; his pages on Robinson Jeffers have caught the harsh dazzle and barren scope of that poetry's landscape which dwarfs the lyric voice, no matter how defiant. Yet nowhere is Mr. Wells intrusive; his method is not a meddling editorial attempt to steal the poet's show. *The American Way of Poetry* achieves that balance of authority and courtesy which makes for good teaching; as a handbook it will heighten sensitivity to poets and poems

without enforcing an imitative response. Many will value such precision as in his corrective comment on Parrington's generalization about the "detached" and "insulated" Longfellow; his poetry, says Mr. Wells, "indisputably expressed" people's "domestic ideals," and he adds, "That it failed to represent all of the domestic actualities by no means places it in the world of unreality." And when, for example, Mr. Wells calls Frost "expositor of a gnarled and ingrown folk spirit . . . an individualist with a passion for neighborliness and an idealist with a passion for reality," the critic is indeed lending his mind out, in the imaginative currency that can make criticism too an art.

Warren Beck

#### RILKE AND HOLDERLIN

*Poems*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Jessie Lemont. Columbia University Press.

*Some Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, translated by Frederic Prokosch. The Poets of the Year. New Directions.

The best German poets were primarily masters of the lyric. On this form they stamped the best of international culture, the rhythms of refined musical sensibilities, and that exaltation of the Platonic Idea embodied in all great literature. Before Hitler came to power, German lyric poets like Hölderlin in the nineteenth and Rilke in the twentieth century had already provided a deep cultural denial to National Socialism.

Miss Lemont has made a daring if somewhat vainglorious attempt to "English" Rilke completely out of the German. Though she succeeds in giving his poetry a smooth lacquer so that the guileless reader never suspects its foreign extraction, she has done

so at considerable expense to her poet. Thus compelled to *re-write* Rilke, she offers a series of third-rate imitations. Miss Lemont is a delicate poet in her own right, but her delicacy and perceptibility continually underestimate Rilke's. Images are freely expanded whenever the original seems somewhat too condensed, or whenever an exact rhyme must be pressed out. For instance: the German text (not included by Miss Lemont) of the poem translated as *Lament* begins, "O wie ist alles fern/ und lange vergangen./ Ich glaube, der Stern/ von welchem ich Glanz empfangen,/ ist seit Jahrtausenden tot./ Ich glaube, im Boot,/ das vorüberfuhr,/ hörte ich etwas Banges sagen./ Im Hause hat eine Uhr/ geschlagen . . ./ Im welchem Haus? . . ./ Ich möchte aus meinem Herzen hinaus/ unter den grossen Himmel treten. . . ." Miss Lemont's startling version appears as follows:

Oh! All things are long passed away and far.  
*A light is shining, but the distant star*  
 From which *it still comes to me* has been dead  
 A thousand years. . . . In the *dim phantom* boat  
 That glided past some *ghastly* thing was said.  
 A clock just struck within *some house remote*.  
 Which house?—*I long to still my beating heart.*

The words I have italicized are not even remotely suggested by the original. In addition, the significant phrases, "ich glaube" ("I believe") and "hörte ich" ("I heard") are not translated at all. Finally, the image of the last two lines which literally means, "I should like to step out of my heart/ under the great sky," is amputated by Miss Lemont's murderously trite, "I long to still my beating heart." Thus, Rilke's meaning is lessened not by half but twice over. Even if the rest of the poem were faithfully translated, the product would be something completely different because of this violence. Examples of such *revisions* crop up everywhere in the volume. It is clear that Miss Lemont did not

intend a literal translation. It is not clear why she did not include the German to help the reader understand where and how and why the deviations in the English were prompted. Her selections from seven of Rilke's books shed less light on the original than if they had come out independently as *Poems—With Profound Apologies to Rilke*.

Fortunately, Mr. Prokosch has not succumbed to the temptation of "re-interpreting" his poet. Moreover, the fifteen poems translated from Hölderlin's early work are accompanied by the German text. They introduce the reader to Hölderlin's individual metrical patterns, his joyous animistic celebration of nature, and his remarkably flexible lyric form. But if Mr. Prokosch's versions are more literal than Miss Lemont's, they are not without disturbances. The translator often interposes staccato "oh's" and "ah's" where they do not occur in the text, because he cannot otherwise render the pregnant apostrophes which the German carries uninterruptedly in its flow. Or, seeking to maintain artifice too strictly, he sometimes misses the long sonorous rhythms of the original and cramps the sense into an almost prosaic paraphrase. A happier medium is struck when Mr. Prokosch modulates his own gifted idiom to fit Hölderlin's melodious pattern, as in addressing the Northeast wind in the poem *Andenken (Reminiscence)*:

Go, go now and greet  
The lovely Garonne  
And the Gardens of Bordeaux  
Along whose sharp-edged shore  
The path follows and deep  
To the current falls the brook and above  
Gaze the noble twins,  
The oak and the silver poplar;  
    . . . . .



In holidays there wander  
The women in brown  
Over the silken floor,  
And in March  
When night and day grow equal  
And over the gradual paths  
Heavy with golden reveries  
Caressive airs go roving.

Edwin Honig

### THREE POETS AND THE WAR

*War Songs*, by Struthers Burt. Charles Scribner's Sons.

*David and Other Poems*, by Earle Birney. The Ryerson Press,  
Toronto.

*Prose Chants and Proems*, by Ross Nichols. The Fortune Press,  
London.

Here are three new volumes of poetry dealing more or less directly with the present conflict and its background—one from the United States, one from Canada, and one from England.

It seems to me that these three poets illustrate rather clearly three different treatments of contemporary material. The subject matter of the books is similar only in that it was gleaned from the years immediately preceding and following the outbreak of the present war. As there are no poems here written later than the early months of 1942, we can look for no optimism based on the mild Allied successes of the past year.

Struthers Burt, a fairly well-known American poet, is interested in singing the glories of America, past and present. His treatment of these wartime themes is historical, patriotic, and usually impersonal. One could easily imagine Walt Whitman or Stephen Vincent Benét telling us the same things, though

technically Mr. Burt is reminiscent rather of Lindsay. These lines are typical both of his style and his preoccupation with American history:

The stout man from Boston, with laughter on his lips,  
Saw the dream as a spreading peace  
Of harbors and of ships,  
Of farms knee-deep with harvest,  
And breast-high with content  
And of decent towns where decent men  
On their sensible business went.

Long lean rifle hidden from the sun—  
By the long lean rifle this country was won;  
By lean men, ragged men, men who read the signs:  
The broken leaf, the turned twig, the track the dust outlines  
By poor men, ragged men, this country was won,  
And by the long lean rifle hidden from the sun.

Earle Birney's treatment of these themes is much more personal. He arouses patriotic feeling only indirectly and seldom consciously. A professor of literature and an idealist, he feels the pity of the war much more keenly than any other aspect of it. But many of these poems, a majority in fact, do not deal with war themes, but with the author's pre-war life in his native Canada, to whose mountains and forests he feels closely akin. *David*, the title poem, is a narrative of a mountain-climbing tragedy, which may have befallen one of the poet's own friends in his youth. The remaining poems in the volume, however, are chiefly lyrical, whether they deal with the war or pre-war themes. There is an implied plea for peace in the contrast between the war poems in this collection and those dealing with the pleasant peacetime life of the poet, but it is not the plea of an escapist. In spite of a tendency toward looseness and lack of discipline, there are instances of striking imagery:

Then, suddenly, one March,—  
 When explosions of spruce were bursting at last  
 At the foot of the cliffs, and the larch,  
 Picked of their yellow flesh by the winter's campaign,  
 Knelt pale in the wind that machinegunned down from the peak—  
 With a crack and the roar of a thousand howitzers,  
 Out from the mountain's writhing camouflage  
 Roared the full broadside of the enemy,  
 The flooding and fanning avalanche.

Ross Nichols, representing England, offers a sharp contrast to the other two. His treatment of the war (and other themes) is tangential. He exhibits considerable versatility and a marked preoccupation with form and technique.

This is the present reviewer's first contact with this poet, who, it is hoped, is a very young one, for he shows both originality and promise, although his present work is very uneven and many of his images fail to find their mark.

From beginning to end Mr. Nichols is a scholar's poet, but so is T. S. Eliot; in fact, there is a good deal of Eliot in these pages, sometimes perhaps a little too much. Mr. Nichols loves to throw in Middle English spellings (trew, bloodstreme, shepe, maed), and in the best Joycian tradition he compounds brave new words from ordinary old words (airfresh, moonfollow, throatbase, teethlips, withinanout).

Mr. Nichols' verse is largely satirical; Auden, as well as Eliot, is here:

. . . when Brooke ran sweet and feeble  
 ere Auden first arose  
 to lift a brassy trumpet  
 and blow down verse to prose:  
 Pound-Eliot just beginning  
 mellifluous dissonance,  
 to hint the classic limits  
 and satirise romance  
 those good old nineteen-twenties,  
 how long ago they seem.

- If anything can be drawn from the contrast of these three poets it is merely that modern poetry is still in the same state of flux that persisted throughout the nineteen thirties. These three volumes certainly offer no evidence of a general trend in any particular direction; they merely record the reactions to the times of three individuals who write three well-known but entirely different types of poetry—the first, patriotic ballads; the second, personal lyrics; the third, experimental verse.

Robert D. Harper

#### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WILLIAM ABRAHAMS is twenty-four. He graduated from Harvard in 1941. He is a sergeant in the Army, into which he was inducted in June, 1942. At present he is stationed in the office of the Provost Marshal, in Miami. This is his first appearance in POETRY.

NELSON DEL BITTNER lives in East Peoria, Ill. He has appeared before in POETRY.

NICHOLAS MOORE is one of the better-known of the new young British poets. He is the author of two books of verse, *The Cabaret, the Dancer and the Gentlemen*, and *The Island and the Cattle*. This is his second appearance here. He lives in Cambridge

R. N. CURREY, an English schoolmaster, was born in South Africa in 1907, educated at Oxford, and now lives in Colchester, Essex. He is the author of a book of poems, *Tiresias*, published in this country by the Oxford Press in 1940. He was introduced to our readers in September 1940. He is in the Army and when last heard from was "under training for a commission in the Royal Artillery."

JEANNE MCGAHEY was born in 1906 on the coast of Oregon, and now lives in Berkeley, Calif. She has contributed to *The New Republic* and won the Emily Chamberlain Cook prize for poetry at the University of California in 1934

LEGARDE S. DOUGHTY, a former newspaperman, now lives in Augusta, Ga. He has appeared in POETRY, *Accent*, etc.

ELIZABETH BOHM was introduced to our readers in September 1938. She was born in London, the daughter of the American painter, Max

Bohm. Her poems have appeared in *The North American Review*, *Commonweal*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, etc. She lives in New York City.

BABETTE DEUTSCH first appeared in POETRY in 1917. She is the author of several books of poetry, the most recent of which is *One Part Love*, and a critical study, *This Modern Poetry*. With her husband, Avraham Yarmolinsky, she has translated extensively from modern Russian and German poetry. She lives in New York City.

EVE MERRIAM, a young New York poet, was introduced in October 1940. She has contributed to a number of leading periodicals.

ISRAEL SMITH, of Jersey Shore, Pa., has appeared here twice before.

EDWIN MUIR, the Scottish poet and critic, was born on the Island of Orkney about fifty years ago. He was a frequent contributor to *The Freeman* during the last World War period and his essays have appeared from time to time in *The New Republic*, *The New Statesman* and other British and American periodicals. He and his wife, Willa Muir, are well known for their translations of Kafka and Feuchtwanger. Among his books are *Transition* (poems), *John Knox*, *Calvinist*, *The Three Brothers* (novel), *The Structure of the Novel*, *The Story and the Fable* (autobiography). He lives at St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland.

KARL SHAPIRO, who has become well known to our readers in the last few years, is still with the American forces on New Guinea. He is the author of *Person Place and Thing*, published last year by Reynal and Hitchcock. He has been awarded our Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize and our Levinson Prize.

The following poets appear here for the first time.

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT, of Berkeley, California, was born twenty-four years ago in Indiana. He attended the University of California, where he received his M.A. in English. He works at present in a Kaiser shipyard. These are his first published poems.

JOSEPH D BENNETT is a native and resident of Pittsburgh. He attended Princeton, where he studied under Tate and Blackmur. He is at present in the Naval Reserve.

W. W. GIBSON is a lieutenant in the Air Corps, and is at present serving somewhere overseas.

All of our prose contributors have appeared previously:

PAUL ENGLE, the well-known young Iowa poet, teaches at the University of Iowa. He is the author of several volumes of poetry, the most recent of which is *West of Midnight*, and a novel, *Always the Land*. He was awarded our Guarantors Prize in 1941. RUTH STEPHAN

lives in Westport, Conn. She has appeared frequently in POETRY. WARREN BECK has written criticism for *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The English Journal*, etc., and is the author of a collection of short stories, *The Blue Sash*. He is represented in Martha Foley's *Best Short Stories: 1943*. He is professor of English at Lawrence College, Appleton, Wis. EDWIN HONIG teaches at Purdue, and is the author of a forthcoming volume on Lorca, to be published in the New Directions Makers of Modern Literature Series. ROBERT D HARPER is an ensign at the Naval Operating Base in Kodiak, Alaska.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Collected Lyrics*, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harper.  
*Le Crève-Coeur*, by Louis Aragon. Pantheon Books.  
*Wonderings*, by John Masefield. Macmillan.  
*The Last Man*, by Weldon Kees. Colt Press, San Francisco.  
*Against a Background on Fire, 1938-1943*, by Frederick Mortimer Clapp. Harper.  
*The Violent*, by Harry Brown. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.  
*Sacred and Secular Elegies*, by George Barker. New Directions.  
*Ziba*, by James Pipes. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla.  
*Mortal Hunger*, by Gustav Davidson. Alan Swallow, Gunnison, Colo.  
*Collected Poems*, by James Leroy Stockton. Chapman & Grimes, Boston.  
*From Invisible Mountains*, by Mary Sinton Leitch. Fine Editions Press, N. Y. C.  
*The White Buck*, by Robert Wallace Smith. Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho.  
*Chart for Voyage*, by Ruth Forbes Sherry. Harvey Parker, Los Angeles.  
*The Mortal Part*, by William B. Cooper. Dorrance, Philadelphia.  
*Let There Be Light*, by Dorothy Hobson. Bruce Fitzgerald, N. Y. C.  
*Sufficient Wisdom*, by Arthur MacGillivray, S. J. Bruce Humphries, Boston.  
*Cobwebs on the Moon*, by Leif A. Erichsen. Garret Pub. Service, Baltimore.  
*It May Be Poetry*, by Harold A. Chumbley. Priv. ptd.  
*The River of Thought*, by Wythe Leigh Kinsolving. Priv. ptd.  
*Vagabond Trails*, by Minter Jackson. Wetzel Pub. Co., Los Angeles.

### ANTHOLOGIES, TRANSLATIONS, AND PROSE:

- American Decade*, edited by Tom Boggs. Cummington Press, Cummington, Mass.  
*The Best Poems of 1942*, selected by Thomas Moulton. Harcourt Brace.

- Green Mountain Verse*, ed. by Enid Crawford Pierce and Helen Hartness Flanders. Farrar and Rinehart.
- The American Way of Poetry*, by Henry W. Wells. Columbia Univ. Press.
- Home Front Memo*, by Carl Sandburg. Harcourt Brace.
- Irish Poetry from the English Invasion to 1798*, by Russell K. Alspach. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- The Triumph of Life*, ed. by Horace Gregory. Viking.
- The Stag's Hornbook*, ed. by John McClure and William Rose Benét. Knopf.
- The New Treasury of War Poetry, 1939 to 1943*, ed. by George Herbert Clarke. Houghton Mifflin.
- The Vigil of Venus*, trans. by Allen Tate. Cummington Press. Cummington, Mass.
- Prose Poems from The Illuminations of Arthur Rimbaud*, trans. by Helen Rootham. New Directions.
- Soviet Poets and Poetry*, by Alexander Kaun. Univ. of California Press, Berkeley.
- Prelude*, by Donald Bear. Pacific Coast Pub. Co., Santa Barbara, Calif.
- Pioneering With Pegasus*, by Lily Lawrence Bow. Naylor Co., San Antonio, Texas.

# P O E T R Y

## *A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

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### THE CHILDREN'S ELEGY

YES, I have seen their eyes. In peaceful gardens  
the dark flowers now are always children's eyes,  
full-colored, haunted as evening under fires  
showered from the air of a burning country.

Shallow-featured children under trees  
look up among green shadows of the leaves.  
The angel, flaming, offers—in his hands  
all is given and he does not change.  
The child changes and takes.  
All is given. He makes and changes.  
The angel stands.

A flame over the tree. Night calling in the cloud.  
And shadow among winds. Where does the darkness lie?  
It comes out of the person, says the child.  
A shadow tied and alive, trying to be.



In the tremendous child-world, everything is high,  
active and fiery, sun-cats run through the walls,  
the tree blows overhead like a green joy,  
and cloudy leopards go hunting in the sky.

The shadow in us sings, "Stand out of the light!"  
But I live, I live, I travel in the sun.

On burning voyages of war they grow.  
Like starving ghosts they stumble after nuns.  
Children of heroes, Defeat the dark companion.  
But if they are told they are happy, they will know.

Who kills the father burns up the children's tears.  
Some suffering blazes beyond all human touch,  
some sounds of suffering cry, far out of reach.  
These children travel with their mother's fears.

Singing, "O make us strong O let us go—"  
The new world comes among the old one's harms,  
old world carrying new world in her arms.  
But if you say they are free, then they will know.

War means to me, sings a small skeleton,  
only the separation,  
mother no good and gone,  
taken away in lines of fire and foam.  
The end of war  
will bring me, bring me home.

The children of the defeated, sparrow-poor and starved,  
create, create, must make their world again.  
Dead games and false salutes must be their grace.  
One wish must flicker from our lives  
to the marred face.

My child, my victim, my wish this moment come!  
But the martyr face cries to us fiercely  
"I search to learn the way out of childhood;  
"I need to fight. I wish, I wish for home."

\*

This is what they say, who were broken off from love:  
However long we were loved, it was not long enough.

We were afraid of the big broad policeman,  
of lions and tigers, the dark hall and the moon.

After our father went, nothing was ever the same,  
when mother did not come back, we made up a war game.

*My cat was sitting in the doorway when the planes  
went over, and my cat saw mother cry;  
furry tears, fire fell, wall went down;  
did my cat see mother die?*

Mother is gone away, my cat sits here coughing.  
I cough and sit. I am nobody's nothing.

However long they loved us, it was not long enough.

For we have to be strong, to know what they did, and then  
our people are saved in time, our houses built again.

You will not know, you have a sister and brother;  
my doll is not my child, my doll is my mother.

However strong we are, it is not strong enough.  
I want to grow up. To come back to love.

\*

I see it pass before me in parade,  
my entire life as a procession of images.  
The toy, the golden kernel, the glass lamp.  
The map she gave me, the first page I read,  
the little animal, the shadowless tall angel.

The angel stands. The child changes and takes.  
He makes a world, stands up among the cousins,  
cries to the family, "Ladies and gentlemen—  
The world is falling *down!*" After the smooth hair  
darkens, and summer lengthens the smooth cheek,  
and the diffuse gestures are no longer weak,  
he begins to be the new one, to have what happened,  
to do what must be done.

O, when the clouds and the blue horse of childhood  
melt away and the golden weapons,  
and we remember the first public day's  
drums and parades and the first angel  
standing in the garden, his dark lips  
and silver blood, how he stood,  
giving, for all he was was given.

I begin to have what happened to me.

O, when the music of carousels and stars  
is known, and the music of the scene  
makes a clear meeting, greeting and claim of gods,  
we see through the fall and curtain of the year  
they change each other with one change of love!  
see, in one breath, in a look!  
See, in pure midnight a flare of broken color  
clears to a constellation.  
Peace is asleep, war's lost. It is love.  
I wanted to die. The masked and the alone  
seemed the whole world, and all the gods at war,  
and all the people dead and depraved. Today  
the constellation and the music! Love.

You who seeking yourself arrive at these lines,  
look once, and you see the world,  
look twice and you see your self.

And all the children moving in their change.

To have what has happened, the pattern and the shock;  
and all of them walk out of their childhood,  
give to you one blue look.

And all the children bowing in their game,  
saying Farewell, Goodbye; Goodbye, Farewell.

*Muriel Rukeyser*

GALILEO GOES TO WAR

This is Galileo's War

Except our freedoms are four, his were only three

Freedom from Family, Freedom from Aristotle, Freedom from the  
Church

Galileo's family included a wine-drinking father who forced him to study medicine but didn't have the money to keep him in school; a manic-depressive mother; a lazy lute-strumming brother Michelangelo, who borrowed heavily from him to buy a job in a royal orchestra and later died insolvent, dumping in Galileo's lap one wife, seven children, one German nurse; two sisters Virginia and Livia, who made him ask for a two-years' salary advance to pay their dowries; a red-headed Venetian mistress, who, after bearing him three children, married a lover by the name of Bartoluzzi, who, of course, demanded a gigantic dowry; and a son Vincenzo, who was a complete financial incompetent but so considerate he left on Galileo's doorstep only one wife, one child

Which is probably enough bad relations for an underpaid math professor

But the real bogeyman was Aristotle

Never has the world so benefited because one man despised another, a blunt little Italian hating an armchair philosopher who'd been in the tomb for over twelve hundred years

Here's what Galileo did just to stick a few pins in Aristotle

He dropped those balls from the Leaning Tower of Pisa

He took a second look at the chandeliers in Campo Santo  
Cathedral

He contrived a gadget for telling how hot or cold it was

He found out why ships would float in water and cannonballs  
would not

He tinkered with magnifying lenses in a hollow tube

He discovered new stars, a mountainous moon, planets with  
satellites

He dabbled in tides to prove the earth moved round the sun

He

How's that again? The earth moves round the sun?

Oh Galileo, Galileo, what have you said? Anybody knows the  
sun moves round the earth, and in Pisa, Padua, Genoa, and  
Florence no self-respecting scholar will touch you with a  
forty-foot pole

Also, it is Heresy; enter, The Church

The laity in Milan blamed the plague on Galileo's new stars

The Pope gathered up his books and burnt them in Rome

The Inquisition tough guys threw him in a dungeon

And browbeat him

And grilled him

Until finally, 70 years old, ruptured, arthritic, half-blind, fearful of the rack and the stake, he broke down and blubbered that he would deny, damn, and condemn all his errors and heresies, that Aristotle was right, the earth was motionless; and triumphant the thugs left him with only a whisper he may or may not have whispered, "It moves, for all that"

They sentenced him to say the Seven Penitential Psalms once a week for three years

They buried him in an obscure corner of a side chapel of Santa Croce

Galileo, Galileo, come up from the tomb, you are going to War

Listen

On the railroad yards of all the men who kick out the college professors, the 100-lb. bomb and the 4,000-lb. bomb strike, as you said, simultaneously

In landing barges that slip onto the beaches where the debt-ridden, brute-ridden peasant looks out to sea, the commandos synchronize their watches with your pendulum

Toward the harbors of cities where the great books are burnt in the public squares, the battleships navigate, as you directed, by the stars

Centering the crosshairs on a man who made the scholars feed

on the slop of darker ages, the sniper aims his rifle with a  
a telescopic sight—your lenses in a hollow tube

Whistling into the last pillboxes of the tough guys who fondle  
the old men with rubber hoses, the artillery shells fall, as  
you calculated, in the true Galilean parabola

And if you wish, Galileo, the infantry will charge the final ob-  
jective shouting your whisper, "It moves, for all that!" know-  
ing that what it moves around is now and always—high,  
clean, bright—the Sun

*Preston Newman*

### TRAINEE

Now born again within the flesh  
Nerve and bone together mesh;  
Now sharp as witty guns retort  
Mind surveys what eyes report.

For muscle's thrust, for nose's message;  
For paunch removed and good health's presage;  
As offering for clean-drawn breath,  
I give my body to this death.

*Harvey Curtis Webster*



TWO POEMS

THE RED SEA CROSSING

It is a world cleft like the sea. The eyeball  
Naked out of reality, wheedling the forever,  
Spins change from the mesh of sameness, rolls forward  
In a trek from Egypt, past pictures on the waves,  
Images countermingling into each other, tradition.

The red sea towers in glass thunderheads overhead,  
Glass twilights rear lowering in their rage,  
While the wrist on the reins of the imperiled fact  
Whips up its intention on the straight endless street  
Onward, next moments lightly skidding into nowhere.

The sea gods are swimming in the walls of water,  
A mardi gras of grimaces crowded on the state,  
Pandemonium thinned to whispers washes the parade  
Of the individual on his chariot racing his fate,  
The harpies of the past following after like seagulls.

In the direction toward event, on the sands  
Of universal lees, through tomorrow's empty front  
He plunges, clouds at the heels foaming into shapes  
Of wolves, chimeras are born of that speed;  
The dust of difference drives between generations.

The driver wears the steel jail of God's muzzle  
But his face is helmeted by his misty childhood

And the walls of standing water quiver and shake  
The finest negation like an undersea lighting—  
On, on—as the implicit end sits with the driver.

It is a race under the penalties of jelling walls  
Doing their own writing, reared entrails of the depth,  
Proportion escapes the deep glove of the senses,  
And black bushes of sound beat about on the air,  
Time is a snarl and festival of invisible flames.

It is a sea divided like the world. The survivor  
Fleeing from flight heads for the open-armed later  
Between the buildings of the wavering great waters,  
The light of sky sprouts windows and brimstone flowers  
Showering the runaway on the roadbed between storms.

#### ON RISING IN THE MORNING

Each day we wake up with a sense of reeling  
As from release or strange heroic act,  
Or as if risen from some bed of healing  
Not hidden quite by all the walls of fact.

Across the glass of sight the insects shuttle  
Roused from their hornets'-nest of little things;  
There is a heavy universe to settle  
With flesh one doorway open to all stings.

The wind goes through the skin as at a window,  
And birdsound through the ear can fill a well;

The eyes will swallow half a sky's blue splendor  
In one quick gulp and gleam with miracle.

The veins in panic scatter through the body  
And yet upon the landscape we wake whole,  
A unity of bone and blood, and rowdy  
We flash the dizzy theories of soul.

It is no past, no pit of dim oblivion,  
Nor underground where the subconscious flows  
From which we rise urged by the sense of living—  
It's simply, man is freer than he knows

And like some Atlas, unburdened of his boulders,  
We rise up in the field of things we meet,  
The earth at long last fallen from our shoulders  
And lying everywhere about our feet.

*Oscar Williams*

## PARLEY IN ALGIERS

Encountered in a wartime capital  
paved with mistrust, these protocols we make  
are but beginnings: early fumbblings toward  
some surer treaty we may one day undertake

despite the empires, newsreels, diplomats  
that govern wars and guard the restless peace  
of interims.

Let us be secret, quick  
lest we be caught, betrayed in this precarious place.

Determine where we touch: learn where our separate states,  
self-governing, profound within themselves,  
make boundaries upon each other; where  
all our frontiers stand; what duties must be paid;

establish rates of currency exchange;  
and tracing from the edges to the heart,  
relate our realms and mark them on a map  
until the time when we no longer need a chart:

O learn all points of contact, and the route  
from my seacoasts to your green-growing plain  
and mark it well before we go apart,  
and memorize the way that we may come again  
a later time when there is time to speak aloud and plain.

*Edward Fenton*

SCENE FROM A COMMON TRAGEDY, UNNAMED

Place: a small bar. Time: middle of a war.  
 The lights as usual, low. Atmosphere dense,  
 Voices a hodgepodge. Tiny tropic birds  
 In a caged background weave their separate strokes  
 Of white and red across a weight of smoke  
 (The people too wear cages) (piercing laughs)  
 (Husband dissatisfied, a maudlin flirt)  
 (Wife sliding down a dull ironic peak  
 To snatch a sequinned cocktail, lean and shriek  
 From a swayed pose of invitation's ample  
 Notice to men, but nobody takes heed—  
 She's overage and desperate and simple,  
 Her eyes not young, her wound inclined to bleed)  
 Girl on a stool is kissing a blond sailor  
 With full-lipped one-track sensuous intent,  
 Sweet with affection whereat he seems pleased,  
 Seems given to hurried intakes of the breath  
 But seems most careful, frugal of consent,  
 Twirling his subtle dials of reserve  
 That broadcast tensely: Leaving, next stop Death,  
 Torpedoes, rubber rafts; No love here, haven't time.  
 A boy, eighteen, twiddles a glass of froth,  
 Jokes "With you soon" (inevitable deep fright)  
 Displays his draft card, says he's leaving school,  
 Never got drunk before but will tonight—  
 Sailor's mute glance a noncommittal glitter  
 (Say casual things) (don't tell him what it's like)  
 A glass upsets, the bright birds fluff and twitter

At alien wings, rude flock beneath the light,  
 Meanings flown over, sudden roomful swarm  
 Of *O my love*. (Who said it? Heavy silence  
 In me? In you? the barkeep or the bird?)  
 The rest, mixed twenties, not in uniform,  
 All semidrunken ingenuous complex  
 (Lean close for glimpses) (nobody quite sure)  
 We photographed the scene in x by x,  
 Developed same in memory-will-endure,  
 Scrawled across faces: *Not exempt. Deferred.*  
 Scene II will follow. Finish glazed but soft.  
 Ourselves not noted, neither seen nor heard,  
 A thumbprint in the margin (won't rub off).

*Dorothy Cowles Pinkney*

ELEGY

Our winter passed: season of airborne speech  
Blown like dry snow under the storm-locked sills,  
Blown over heavy nipples seas that fed  
The blood-stained hydra mouths: we heard them late  
In frozen night, liping through moon-cold boughs.

*The mind net-caught, the white hypnotic fear,  
The bowed head and the listening ear—  
Lord of high space, forgive.*

We left our house, ghost-sealed. Westward we saw  
The rose-warm flowering maple fur the deep  
Thigh pockets of young valleys; watched the grave heron ride  
Spring thunder, while the private woodthrush sang  
His bronze mechanical grief through slow rain falling.

*Let the numb flesh, fear-corded, break  
From winter sleep, the slack heart wake:  
Red sinew of life, grow strong.*

Deep into summer, then: swamp mist that lifts the weight  
From morning hilltops, white as the flank of birch  
Where the new moth fans dry his wet fawn wings;  
Chill as the lace the sultry copperhead  
Sheds on grey rock, as danger under laurel.

*When ivy takes a lacquered sheen  
And nightshade fruit hangs globed and green  
From the dark leaf, beware.*

RUTH LECHLITNER

Grain writing in slow gold the history of need;  
Green into purple and the flush of red:  
October's heavy loins: the blood-flecked fruit  
Torn from earth's flesh, broken in time's great wound . . .  
And frozen night and moon-cold boughs again.

*The house again, the voices, low*

*Bright stars that shine on winter snow:*

*Come, child of our love, come home.*

*Ruth Lechlitner*

SOFT RAIN

Upon the roof, rain rushes and hesitates. . . .

Night will not moor my bed.

I lie, circled by thorns of thought,

With all of childhood in my head:

Incredulous and curtained now,

With all of childhood's credulous eye

Turned from a scene of captive men

Who tunnel graves where they will die.

Tomorrow leans against the sill,

A savage sword, dark on the light

Of innocence that fosters home:

There cannot be soft rain tonight.

*Florence Kerr Brownell*



TWO POEMS

CONCERT, IN WARTIME

The pianist thought he was driving a cart to market  
the wheels careful  
under the brilliant fruit and the wine jars.  
Then the pianist thought he was running  
with a waterfall in his arms,  
stopping in this room  
to lift from the chorded white of waters  
the girl without a heart.

But these he imagined . . .  
he was offering, really, a boy's head  
on an airplane propeller;  
he was shouting to the rustled programs  
that these stained curls were beyond their kisses.  
And he marched through the keys,  
drumming that all fortresses were taken—  
and no applause please  
because the hands striking the piano  
were bloody stumps.

MAGIC IN THE HOUSE

They knew it would be like this  
when he was gone . . .  
All through enchanted weeks  
they watched, they clung to his sky-colors,  
touched his beginning love, and longed, and feared . . .

As if he were a little child  
lent for an afternoon's play  
to the yearning and childless—  
they watched him and marveled.

While he blazed through the house,  
free as wings in a grove—a cedar grove—  
then to adoring hands  
joyfully descended.

And when he sang  
he drew them, transfigured,  
into constellated gardens,  
and raised their suddenly selfless eyes  
to the march and flight of angels.

And they heard God walking in the upper rooms.

Borrowed, only; never entirely theirs!  
They knew it would be like this:  
the stilled air, the gloomed room,  
the struck heart.

But who could foresee  
the compassionate love  
shining forever in the blue eyes of Death?

*Eva Triem*

TWO POEMS

CANDLEMAS

Out of his high room and round the stair  
A man came down to where his lover was,  
Down the steep dangers and held her there.

The sun stood over them like burning brass,  
Birds hanging like hailstones in the air  
Flew into the stillness and could not pass.

So from blue winter he felt the year  
Ripen the blood in him, observed the grass  
Growing like poetry. And he could hear

The rhythm of danger all thunder has  
Racing her pulses and the quick fear  
Leaping around her, a subtle gas.

This miracle and myth is everywhere  
Made daily more beautiful and bright as glass—  
A man and a woman within a tear

Clearer than crystal at Candlemas.

EARTHBOUND

All day he lay there, hearing the mute  
Noise of machinery beneath that place,

Roots changing their gears, stones turning  
Over and over. The birds all night  
Sang of the wondrous beauty in his face.

So it is told us. But history gives  
No ultimate verdict upon his fate.  
Some say he was mad, and one living  
Close to that lonely spot says all the leaves  
Suddenly held their breath, as at the great

Moment of tragedy. For thus the world  
Makes and maintains her secrets, calling us  
Down like Persephone into the dark  
Wombs of creation or like the child  
Into its marvelous solitude; and thus

Out of the warm earth our legends grow.  
People passing that way in spring are sad  
Seeing his eyes in flowers, in the trees  
His lovable brave limbs. I think they know  
More than they understand, and are afraid.

*John Hall*

TWO POEMS

LOVE SONG: CARTHAGE BEACH

Because I have an always need  
To strike for roots, like human hand,  
I am willing to believe this girl  
Who lies to me upon the sand.

Hell, there's no use kidding, boys  
Or waiting for that someday she,  
To come like swan, propelled by love  
With sighs for you and lips for me.

So when with practiced mouth  
She offers me vermilion bliss,  
I take her, dreaming all the while  
Of one who waits my private kiss.

And plunged in whitewashed strands of shore  
Entwined and drowned in her alone,  
I make love in my high school French  
And listen for her weary moan.

When in a momentary heave  
She seems to give herself, sincere,  
I see within her transient eyes  
Goodbye irises appear.

After, when she dusts her skirt

And combs off sand, her tresses neat,  
I've time enough to say goodbye,  
And gallantly to pay my sweet.

SURGERY: AT SEA

Circled by lights which pin him to the stage,  
His torso, swathed in white, becomes our life.  
And the throbbings fuse. The seas', the ship's, our hearts;  
Nor do they matter now. What was our pain  
Is ultravioleted, drenched in white.

And these hands only, sheathed and shiny live;  
Hung listless yesterday, they poise with joy  
Above their deed. As if forewarned he moans,  
His eyelids beat against blue, moistened fields  
And time is spittle moving over lips.

None breathes, the air is drained, we drown until  
The scalpel leaps obscenely into flesh.  
It spurts in crimson waves a rose of blood.  
When time resumes, a scarlet gauze falls down  
And sprawls along the tile. Now you may leave.

The jealous night sea is your foe again;  
Here will remain some sterile images:  
The tired mouth ajar, a lysoled air,  
And clustered at his side, in disarray,  
A tray, with any kind of blood-slaked blades.

*Irving Wexler*

AT THE WINDOW

Only one's own room and hotel lounges  
with steep sheeted glass, are detached;  
seen from inside a cube  
in which heat takes on solidity  
and presses you, the snow appears  
rolled up along the curbs  
with the coarse relaxation of wet, discarded towels;  
from their base the elevator buildings reach,  
and augment, and quite overcome the sky.

On the angle where the sidewalks interfere,  
a woman, still as a parking sign,  
quivers like a neurasthenic rose;  
a nine-year-old-boy runs  
with the hop of a red kite  
diagonally against my latched frame, and perishes;  
into my four-sided universe  
trolley cars find quick crises, and attenuate,  
recurring like sleep  
with noise of stale ripening.

Eventually you touch those strings that play  
stock gestures on an old recording set,  
holding that smile a block away  
to the bulging concourse or grocery sign;  
just below that boy displaced himself again,  
fluttering between some fixed uplifting plants—

JEROME H. WEISSER

Under her brown hat, at the upper left,  
a woman's eye, holding an inch of shape from the architecture,  
opens its lens with the meekness that it knew  
before the manor crumbled.

I taste the orange, which you  
my peach-faced lad, bundled up against catching cold,  
are peeling, with the immediate sweetness  
of having grown it in my mouth,  
the same that offered itself to a Tuscan farmer  
on a hot Tuesday in the Renaissance.

*Jerome H. Weisser*

LITTER

Now all along my reedy shore  
The litter of sea life is flung,  
A spar, a rope, a melon peel,  
The bottle that the wet grass hung.  
A liquid line marks sea and sky  
With bluer blue than any plum  
As my eye seeks the puff of white  
In rounded sail that does not come.  
I think I lost love like a shell  
Now cupped forever in the sand,  
Like whited boat ripped on a reef  
Or silver fish gone from the hand.

*Jay West*



WOMAN: THE MAD ONE

As soon as nighttime thickens  
And all that was erect must rest  
And all that was most secret stirs,  
I hear him climb the stairs.  
No matter that he comes unheard,  
That I'm the only one aware.  
Why should his step resound  
In another's sleeplessness?

In one breath of mine he's climbing  
And I suffer till he comes—  
Mad cataract his destiny  
One time rejects, uplifts another,  
And thornbranch, feverish mad,  
That grates against my door.  
I dare not rise; my eyes are closed,  
But I see his form entire—  
That instant, like small quarry,  
We have truce beneath the night.  
But I hear him climb back down  
Like an eternal tide.

Night long he goes and comes,  
Mad gift, that's given and ungiven;  
Medusa by the waves upflung  
That may be seen, that slides up near.  
I from my bed am helping him  
With all my breath that's left,

That he may not, searching, stumble,  
And in the darkness hurt himself.

The deaf planks of the stairs steps  
Screech to me like crystal scratched.  
I know those where he stops to rest  
And questions himself, and speaks his answer.  
I hear those where the faithful logs,  
Just like my soul, complain to him,  
And know the step, mature and last,  
Which was to come, which never comes.

I feel the fire his face gives off,  
A brick that's burning at my door;  
My house is suffering with his body,  
Twisting, darkening, with his flame.  
I taste a joy I never knew,  
And suffer living, die alert,  
And in this stage of agony  
My strength slips from me to his strength.

Next morning I recall in vain  
With my cheeks and with my tongue,  
Retracing where his breath made fog  
On the mirror at the stairs.  
Some little hours my soul is still  
Until the night falls blind again.

The vagabond who sees him pass  
Tells me of him like a fable.

He can hardly drag his flesh,  
He barely is, of all he was,  
And the look with which he looks  
One time freezes, others burns.

Whoever meet him, never question,  
Tell him, just, not to return,  
Nor send his memory climbing back,  
That he may sleep, that I may sleep;  
Kill the name which like a wind  
Flaps in dust behind his trail,  
And never look back to my door,  
Wide open, like a bonfire, red.

*Gabriela Mistral*  
*translated by Richard O'Connell*  
*and James Graham Luján*

## BURNING THE CHRISTMAS GREENS

Their time past, pulled down  
cracked and flung to the fire  
—go up in a roar

All recognition lost, burnt clean  
clean in the flame, the green  
dispersed, a living red,  
flame red, red as blood wakes  
on the ash—

and ebbs to a steady burning  
the rekindled bed become  
a landscape of flame

At winter's midnight  
we went to the trees, the coarse  
holly, the balsam and  
the hemlock for their green

At the thick of the dark  
the moment of the cold's  
deepest plunge we bought branches  
cut from the green trees

to fill our need, and over  
doorways, about paper Christmas  
bells covered with tinfoil  
and fastened by red ribbons

we stuck the green prongs  
in the windows hung  
woven wreaths and above pictures  
the living green. On the

mantle we built a green forest  
and among those hemlock  
sprays put a herd of small  
white deer as if they

were walking there. All this!  
and it seemed gentle and good  
to us. Their time past,  
relief! The room bare. We

stuffed the dead grate  
with them upon the half-burnt-out  
log's smoldering eye, opening  
red and closing under them

and we stood there looking down.  
Green is a solace  
a promise of peace, a fort  
against the cold (though we

did not say so) a challenge  
above the snow's  
hard shell. Green (we might  
have said) that, where

small birds hide and dodge  
and lift their plaintive

rallying cries, blocks for them  
and knocks down

the unseeing bullets of  
the storm. Green spruce boughs  
pulled down by a weight of  
snow — Transformed!

Violence leaped and appeared  
Recreant! roared to life  
as the flames rose through and  
our eyes recoiled from it.

In the jagged flames green  
to red, instant and alive. Green!  
those sure abutments . . . Gone!  
lost to mind!

and quick in the contracting  
tunnel of the grate  
appeared a world! Black  
mountains. black and red—as

yet uncolored—and ash white,  
an infant landscape of shimmering  
ash and flame and we, in  
that instant, lost,

breathless to be witnesses,  
as if we stood  
ourselves refreshed among  
the shining fauna of the fire.

*William Carlos Williams*

## THE PATHETIC FALLACY AND THE THING IN ITSELF

NOW THAT the values of Imagism are far enough behind us to be scanned, we can consider some of the conventions they drew upon, whether successfully or not, and some of the conventions we have accepted from them. The part of the *ism* with which I am concerned here is the interest in the object "for its own sake," the stress on the object's own perceivable qualities and textures. We have been accustomed to Max Eastman's emphasis on the vivid presentation to sense, to Amy Lowell's "externality," to Professor Lowes' more academic summary "What does it look like, sound like, feel like, taste like, smell like?—that formula is the very sea-mark of our utmost sail." The quality of the thing, not our feeling about it, has been important for poetic statement; or the quality as correlative of the feeling, in T. S. Eliot's term. So we have had a great lot of cool and silver stars, and general synesthesia.

A poetic device which may well be particularly foreign to such evaluation is what Ruskin just a century ago named the "pathetic fallacy," the attribution of human aspects and emotions to natural objects. I have been recently studying this device in the poetry which was the object of Ruskin's criticism, and I have found in its history a tendency which has surprising bearing on the results of the Imagists.

When eighteenth-century poets like Collins, Gray, Beattie, Cowper, Burns, and poets of the next generations like Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, attributed human feelings to nature (and this is the only kind of attribution I am counting here), they did so with considerable agreement in both quantity and quality. *Laughing flowers, angry deep, smiling land, proud steed,*

*mournful scene*, were the phrases they used, and many more like them with little deviation. The frequency of use, too, they had in common: about one attribution in every forty to sixty lines, or about once in every two pages. That must have seemed, indeed, a fairly large amount of fallacy to one who, like Ruskin, believed *raging waves* and such expressions to be "simple falsehood, uttered by hypocrisy; definite absurdity, rooted in affectation, and coldly asserted in the teeth of nature and fact." (*Modern Painters*, III, IV, xii, 15). It was, on the contrary, for the Romantics a most reasonable, normal, and intrinsically poetic way of expression, for it bestowed upon hills and fields and flowers and trees the only value they could have, that given them by immediately associated, and immediately stated, human feeling, spiritual feeling, and sympathy.

The poetic phenomenon of the fallacy was part of a larger poetic phenomenon, the density of stated emotion of all kinds. The "pathetic," the emotion, if not applied to nature, was applied to the human body where it was felt, in "fiery passionate blood" and so on. Or the emotion was personified or abstracted. One way or another it managed to be stated about once in every six lines of Romantic poetry, a good solid amount. Attribution to nature, then, was simply part of a whole way of thought which found greatest human value in basic human feelings mixed in various complexities of affections and binding man to the great moral passion and spirit of the universe. And the poetic device of attribution was a part of the whole "diction" of emotion in the times. It becomes apparent that poets living in the same milieu of thought and feeling, however various their individual styles, are in a way limited by their very sense of the possibilities and so



phrase alike, as they share alike, the attitudes contemporary to them.

The pathetic fallacy thus thrived through the years of Keats and Shelley, but suddenly and immediately with Tennyson can be seen a modification. This modification lasted through the century. It was a new sort of agreement, and as consistent as the earlier one. The fallacy dropped, in Tennyson to two-thirds, and then in Rossetti, Morris, Meredith, Hopkins, Housman to less than one-half of its former amount. In quantity, then, it became far less important. In quality too it changed, diminishing the emphasis on the pathetic and the sympathetic within itself as it grew increasingly involved with qualitative factors. Whereas the eighteenth-century fallacy attributed feelings which fitted an outward show of correspondence, the lark gay, the stormy sea angry, the fields smiling, and so on, the nineteenth-century fallacy in its decline gave nature many inward causes for feeling, apart from aspect of sympathy and type representation. So Tennyson writes down "The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn," "The amorous odorous wind," "Poor Fancy sadder than a single star,/That sets at twilight in a land of reeds." Here the vision is one of sensed qualities, not objects, as the associates of emotions. The star is not sad by standards of kind and aspect but because it sets at twilight (more complex association), and in a land of reeds (immediate atmosphere). The wind's feeling is explained by its special quality; the usually happy dawn is tearful as it is glimmering, as seen through tears. In the beginning of *In Memoriam* Tennyson addresses a funereal yew, eighteenth-century sign of mourning; but he does not treat it as representative, saying rather,

## *The Pathetic Fallacy and the Thing in Itself*

. . . gazing on thee, sullen tree,  
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood.  
I seem to fail from out my blood  
And grow incorporate into thee.

Here again he makes the human bond with the natural a bond of physical quality. *Sick*, not *sad*; *incorporate*, not *sympathetic*.

Sick, dim, silver, iron, sweet, these were the words which were growing in abundance, which critics of the Pre-Raphaelite poets complained of, and which imposed even on the fading pathetic fallacy their powers of adjective over noun. "Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea." "Four spikes of sad sick sunflowers stand," these are Rossetti's and Morris'. And "What is all this juice and all this joy? / A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning" is recognizably Hopkins. Eighteenth-century outward aspect had clearly turned to what Hopkins called "inscape," the qualities and inner structure of the thing itself; and so the named noun was not adequate. It was the qualifying and discriminating adjective that mattered.

This change which we note within the device of pathetic fallacy was never, of course, thorough or full-blown. Rossetti and Hopkins and naturally Housman, who was a good follower, used many *sighing airs*, *blithe birds*, *merry morns* which were not far from eighteenth-century acceptance, even if smaller in number. Swinburne, on the other hand, though many of his phrasings had changed with his time, still used the earlier large amounts. In other words, the facts which it seems to me useful to point out here are three: first, that from, say, 1740 to 1940 there has been a regular core of diction appearing steadily in poetry as a whole with persistence and uniformity, attributing feeling to nature. Perhaps some of it has always existed. At least many of its objects and emotions, though amazingly limited, are constantly recurrent.

But secondly, about 1840, just when Ruskin named and condemned the artificiality of the device, it decreased by half and remained so decreased, with some exceptions, throughout the century. And thirdly, much of the device which did remain took to itself the very poetic element which was supplanting it, the new emphasis on color, atmosphere, texture, "the thing in itself" with its adjectival discriminations. So it is possible to trace in microcosm the decline, endurance, adaptability of poetic thought through poetic language.

A main question in the light of this speedy history may well be, how such knowledge applies to modern poetry. What can we learn about modern poetry in these terms and what can we do about it? As far as I have looked, I have learned the following facts: that T. S. Eliot, as probable representative of a good deal of modern poetry, does indeed show only minimum interest in the pathetic device, his use declining again by half from the nineteenth century; but that, on the other hand, such collections of verse as Imagist anthologies, "pure poetry" anthologies, and POETRY itself maintain the fallacy in all its older abundance if not its older glory.

This latter is a point which interests and puzzles me. As we have seen, Imagism purported to have grown out of the love for the "thing in itself" which stressed quality and "inscape" and many of the virtues which the Pre-Raphaelites and Art for Art's Sakers were working toward. It broke, on the other hand, from the subjectivism, sentimentalism, and generality of those Victorians who were following the older Wordsworth tradition. Yet the anthology *Some Imagist Poets* of 1915 made exactly as many general, sentimental attributions of feeling to nature as Words-

worth did. Moreover, it did not improve upon the device. True, it widened the range of included objects, and this is a notable point, that the range of objects had been widening all down through the two centuries, from hills and fields and seas and streams and animals at first, to flowers and minuter creatures in Wordsworth's poetry (the very sort of inclusion which caused him so much trouble), to many more specified and often uglier facts of landscape in the Victorians, to the special particularities of these Imagists: *wind, mist, smoke, rye, fireflies, deer, irises*. But the attributions of feeling are simple and standard, in terms of *love, shame, happiness, weeping*, and outstandingly as for the eighteenth century, *pride*. No new concepts inform or control the usage, though it seems very fondly and not mechanically made. The nineteenth-century adjective is still important to the idea, as in Aldington's "I know that the white wind loves you," and Lawrence's "A fine proud spike of purple irises." The fallacy seems to have gone along with "objectivity" very neatly for these Imagists, though I cannot see that it added any particularly Imagistic value to their work. The introduction to the volume, as well as stating the well-known platform of exactitude and clarity of image and suitability of cadence, says that the poems included represent their authors' own choice; and we see that within the selection D. H. Lawrence used the most images, only H. D. used none. So it is possible to surmise that members of the group differed in practice; but at least we may conclude from the volume itself that neither was the fallacy foreign to Imagism, nor was Imagism in its treatment of nature in a direct advancing line of development.

Reconsidering poetry's view and language of natural objects, we may perceive that Ruskin and his followers among the Pre-

Raphaelites, and Browning and Meredith, Hopkins, Housman, Eliot, even Jeffers as a matter of fact, for all his emphasis on hawk and rock, all these and other representative poets have been moving toward a closer and closer realization in poetry of what Arnold called "the object as it really is," of what others have called the "thing in itself." As the term has been variously defined by philosophers and critics through the century, so the poets have with consistency interpreted it even through such inherited devices as the attribution of emotion to nature. Ruskin and Tennyson in the same decade worked separately toward the same end: less fallacy and more minute observation of objects' qualities and structures. Meredith critically wrote against the fallacy and practically minimized his own poetic use of it. Eliot, by his very stress of the now widespread term "objective correlative" made clear that the object's function was to suggest feeling, not by attribution to participate in it explicitly. I. A. Richards and many others have warned against the use of stated emotion in poetry, and the tendency has been, even often definitionally, to emphasize the implicative powers of poetry and the atmospheric qualities of the object. This trend has been as much a fashion, of course, as the statement of emotion and the strong use of fallacy was for Gray, Collins, Pope, Wordsworth; and the small device can be seen to reflect within its very diminution and alteration the change in the fashion.

But the further point of interest in 1943 is that we may note how in at least one respect, and so possibly in more, the Imagism on which we were raised was reactionary: basic, as it said it hoped to be, not in the sense of renewing old devices, but in the sense of old-fashionedness, employing but not adapting the old devices. George Moore in his *Pure Poetry* anthology

condemned Wordsworth for seeking out the "soul" rather than the "image" in a scene, yet his own selection of English poems was more loaded with the vocabulary of "soul" than that body of poetry unselected. The rebellion re-adopted but did not improve that against which it rebelled.

POETRY itself may be looked at for a final example of the development. It may be said of POETRY, too, I believe, that it continues the older tradition of fallacy without making the intrinsically meaningful alterations of it which the Victorians made. The March 1940 issue contains one fallacy in about ninety lines, the January 1943 issue one in forty, a frequency again like Wordsworth's. The poets of these two issues have taken the eighteenth-century emphasis in quantity. Quality too is conventional: *hopes of day, proud horses, sighing grass, serious evening, weeping sun, moon's mournful splendor, nervous roots, mournful cry* of a bird. In the latter issue, Marguerite Young has a good poem, *The Raven*, which is all in fallacy terms both explicit and implicit. The few poems which apply feeling to mechanical objects use figures very like those of Erasmus Darwin in his *Botanic Garden*. One difference I do note, however, is not in the phrasing but in the tone and attitude of the attributive poems. Some of them, like *The Raven*, though they bestow emotion do so not straightforwardly but with such apparent neutrality of color that a discrepancy between interest and statement becomes evident. It may be then that some of the modern conventional fallacy phrasing is used in partial and tenuous irony. This is a variation upon the literal or qualified device with which the magazine is so well supplied.

It may be asked, how is one to evaluate these usages? Is one to praise poets for maintaining the stability of a tradition or to

blame them for maintaining it so unmodified? I think the positive contributions of the Victorians lead to the latter answer. They first accepted the device in decreased degree, and then adapted it to their own central interests. The good nineteenth-century fallacies are as strong as the good eighteenth-century ones, though different. This virtue cannot be granted the Imagist and more recent fallacies I have looked at, despite their increase in number.

A solution for the poet, if he feels the need of one, may be the solution made in principle by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets alike: the drawing of poetic phrase from contemporary prose. Ruskin in prose and Tennyson in poetry agreed in drawing from their immediate worlds.

I do not think the Imagists found and I do not think many of us are finding now the pathetic fallacy at so vital a source.

*Josephine Miles*

#### MR. MACNEICE AND MISS SITWELL

LOUIS MACNEICE, in *Modern Poetry*, testifies to his fondness, when in public school, for the Sitwells. Among other qualities he admired them for their rebellious, contemptuous stand and their low estimate of British Rotarianism ("public-school values"). He liked them because their poetry was often obscure and because it presented an album of strange, story-book characters; (he says he was rereading his fairy tales at the time).

Edith Sitwell, "technically more adventurous" than her brothers, possibly exercised not a little influence on Mr. MacNeice's early poetry (through his Oxford period). An examination of this part of his published work yields a number of parallels, at least,

which, considering his delight in reading the work of Edith Sitwell, may well have been derived directly from her.

One idea of Miss Sitwell's which Mr. MacNeice appears to appropriate is that of the plight of the aged. In *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Troy Park*, and elsewhere, Miss Sitwell's old women are nearly always complaining that they are old. Laidronette, "the unbidden fay," grumbles,

I am very cross because I am old,  
And my tales are told  
And my flames jewel-cold.

In *Cradle Song for Miriam* Mr. MacNeice ends on a similar petulant note:

This is too much, the flames say, insulted,  
We who were once the world's beauties and now  
No one pays attention  
No one remembers us.

Mr. MacNeice confesses sympathy with the Sitwells' "child-cult," the nostalgic glance out of this world. (In the Sitwells it is really more than a glance: it amounts almost to a steady gaze.) Edith Sitwell makes frequent reference to the old days:

When we were young, how beautiful life seemed!—  
Sweet was my childish life to me . . .

Similarly, Mr. MacNeice recalls his "dozing childhood" in one poem, writes another one—satiric—on *Happy Families*, and in *Evening Indoors* asks us to

See that Madonna snuff out the shaded light  
And stroke with soothing hand asleep the night.

He himself acknowledges that such a passage as

When I was small, each tree was voluble,  
Each shrubby Dodona . . .

is "exactly the same key as much of Edith Sitwell's *Troy Park*."

Closely associated with this Peter Pan-ism, this feeling that



"growing up is a spiritual deterioration," is the use of nursery rhyme principles. Miss Sitwell set a pattern which Mr. MacNeice followed successfully in a satiric poem he calls *Peripeteia*. Her *Sir Belzebub* and *I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside* are marked by artificiality, alternate clarity and nonsense, a fantastic use of capitals and of monosyllabic lines—contributing to a total comic and breezy effect:

WHEN  
Sir  
Belzebub called for his syllabub . . .  
and

WHEN  
Don  
Pasquito arrived at the seaside . . .

Mr. MacNeice's piece preserves this same galloping pace which all but masks an acute satire in which the Pharisee is taken down a notch:

Descending out of the grey  
Clouds elephant trunk  
Twitches away  
Hat;  
THAT  
Was *not* what I expected . . .

The words in capitals in each poem have the effect of winding up a mechanical toy that, suddenly released, runs on and on until it must at last be wound again. (In fact, Mr. MacNeice indicates that his poem is to be repeated *ad nauseam*.)

In his testimony he calls attention to the "rococo ornament" in the Sitwells' verse. From the overflowing coffers of example in Edith Sitwell's work the reader may recall the fairies who, invited to the christening of the princess, ordered

Their richest trains, their plumes, and their bright trumps  
Like silver fruits that from dark branches grow in clumps.

Mr. MacNeice's version of the rococo is hardly less florid:

Under the coffered gilt the court historian  
Turns the mothy silks that time has left him.

In the matter of figurative language Mr. MacNeice is sometimes very close to Edith Sitwell. In *Poussin* "the clouds . . . like golden tea" are suspiciously similar to "the tea . . . gold as evening" in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Furthermore, the synesthetic use of *fur* occurs in both poets. Miss Sitwell, for instance, writes:

Furred is the light

and

The fire was furry as a bear . . .

whereas Mr. MacNeice speaks of

The sun's breathing golden prickling fur  
Over a vibrant belly . . .

Similarity in rhyme, in assonance, alliteration, and consonance, is obvious from the following quotation.

Nobody comes to give him his rum but the  
Rim of the sky hippopotamus-glum  
Enhances the chances to bless with a benison  
Alfred Lord Tennyson crossing the bar laid  
With cold vegetation . . .

(evidence also of Miss Sitwell's *enfant terrible* pose which Mr. MacNeice admired) and this from Mr. MacNeice:

The river falls and over the walls the coffins of cold funerals  
Slide deep and sleep there in the close tomb of the pool  
And yellow waters lave the grave and pebbles pave its mortuary . . .

Though Mr. MacNeice, according to his own report, wrote little modern poetry for three years after leaving Oxford, when he returned to it he still demonstrated (though possibly in more scattered instances) an interest in Miss Sitwell.

We find an *Aubade* written in 1934 which recalls Miss Sitwell's frequent poems of this kind. Generally speaking, these

pieces, in contrast to the mood of Browning's Pollyanna Pippa, rest their crux on the unpalatable aspects of daybreak:

Where the cold dawn lies whining (Sitwell)

Not the twilight of the gods but a precise dawn  
Of sallow and pale bricks (MacNeice)

Miss Sitwell's *aubades* in various ways remind Jane to "forget the pain" in her heart. Though Mr. MacNeice has published only one poem of this *genre*, it echoes Miss Sitwell's tone.

What Mr. MacNeice calls Edith Sitwell's "ballet coloring" is reflected in his own lines. Her "saint-blue skies with gold stars sown," her "lovely milk-white unicorn," her "breeze/ Of amber and of orangeries," are not far removed from Mr. MacNeice's

. . sky, plum after sunset, merging to duck's egg barred  
with mauve . .

or his

. . . traffic signals, crème de menthe or bull's blood . . .

(both from *Birmingham*, 1933.)

A close reader of Miss Sitwell could not avoid recalling her frequent "stalactite" image—"stalactites of rain," "stalactites of boredom." And, indeed, in *Autumn Journal* (1938) Mr. MacNeice writes:

The silent hours grow down like stalactites.

Birmingham and Bedford College and, more recently, Cornell, however, have seen Mr. MacNeice brought so much nearer the world that he has in the past decade lost a great part of the Sitwellian aura.

*Richard Crowder*

## REVIEWS

### TENOR OF A DECADE

*American Decade*, edited by Tom Boggs. The Cummings-ton Press.

*American Writing 1942*, edited by Alan Swallow. The Press of James A. Decker

MR. BOGGS has read 500,000 poems and Mr. Swallow has read most of the little magazines published in 1941-42. From the published results, the first method appears to be preferable, although there is no earthly reason why this should be so.

Actually, a comparison of the two books proves once again how completely the excellence of an anthology depends on the taste of its editor. There have often been cases where men with sterling critical principles have failed miserably in the actual task of selection. The reason for this must be that an anthology is the expression of individual opinion applied to the choice of individual poems. Where the anthologist is cowed by public opinion or where his taste is defective (that is, since this is a matter of opinion, at irreconcilable odds with the individual reader) the end product is almost inevitably bad.

The mean that must be hit, then, lies somewhere between complete acceptance of general opinion and an arbitrary and independent, perhaps even erratic, individual opinion. To achieve it seems to require talent rather than rules.

Taken in such a light, the Boggs anthology is a good collection. It has, however, an additional value. For the first time the poetry of the past ten years has been whittled down to a size appropriate for some sort of critical judgment.

To make such a judgment, one must assume (although the assumption is obviously debatable) that the collection is typical. The assumption is aided by the fact that most of the recognized poets writing during the past ten years are included in the Boggs anthology—E. E. Cummings, Kenneth Fearing, Karl Shapiro, Wallace Stevens, John Wheelwright, etc.

The poems in *American Decade* have an obvious similarity in tone—a cynicism and disillusionment inevitable in a decade of economic unrest and war, and a frenzied grasping for metaphysical principles unaffected by time and politics. Those poets who have been preoccupied with this quest have, on the whole, written the better poems.

But the result of this search for solace via eternal principles is far from conclusive. And this is shown all too clearly in the poems themselves.

It is significant that a poem such as Wallace Stevens' *Dry Loaf*, which begins so energetically with: "It is equal to living in a tragic land / To live in a tragic time," should end with lines as weak as: "No doubt that soldiers had to be marching / And that drums had to be rolling, rolling, rolling." Yet Stevens has one of the clearest lights on this problem. In *The American Sublime* he asks quite simply: "How does one stand to behold the sublime . . . What wine does one drink? What bread does one eat?" And he hints at the answer: "The pensive man . . . He sees that eagle float / For which the intricate Alps are a single nest."

Not another poet has this problem so definite in his mind. Often the problem seems too big for them and they retreat, weakly, back into the pat conclusions of cynicism. This probably explains why, except for Stevens, the most complete poems in this anthology

of a decade describe instability in itself and nothing more: such poems, for example, as John Ciardi's *Poem From a Hired Room* or Kenneth Fearing's *Elegy in a Theatrical Warehouse*. Or the transitoriness is ended only by death or a death-like disproportion, as in Karl Shapiro's *Terminal* or *Poet*.

There is hardly any alternative to this sort of poetry if the poetry is to have genuine roots in its time. And this tenor does not by any means imply that these poems are inferior to those of a confident civilization. As a whole they seem to have much more richness, tightness, and depth than, say, the pre-war efforts of the Georgians. The poets included in this anthology show evidence of weight and exceptional ability which may bring forth a poetic renaissance in this next post-war world of far greater brilliance than that of the last.

Turning to *American Writing*, 1942, however, we have a picture far less bright. It is difficult to determine whether this is the fault of the compiler, the little magazines, or the young American poets. Except for one or two, the poems are slick and contrived. A few short stories are included in this book, and they are several degrees more enjoyable. There is also an honor roll giving the names of those literary magazines which published blue ribbon stories or poems, in addition to an exhaustive list of little magazines published in the United States in 1941. Although the usefulness of these last features is marred by a remarkably bad job of bookmaking, little has been published so far which serves a similar purpose.

Marian Castleman

SOFT AND LOUD

*No Boundary*, by Lenore G. Marshall. Henry Holt.

*The Sound I Listened For*, by Robert Francis. Privately printed.

*A Time to Speak*, by Thomas Caldecot Chubb. Fine Editions Press.

Many poets since Emily Dickinson have an echo of her in their verse. Mrs. Marshall and Mr. Francis have traces of her, though both have original accents too. Here is Mr. Francis' elaboration of a distinctly Dickinsonian theme:

Now night the sneak thief comes  
Warily from the woods,  
Shadowing our homes,  
Greedy for all our goods

Doors cannot keep him out.  
Windows are for his peeping.  
Soon he will roam about  
In rooms where we are sleeping.

Who knows what he will take?  
What he will leave behind?  
Who knows when we awake  
What we shall never find?

There is in this poem, first, the air of mystery she loved so much. (A woman who rarely traveled from her home in Amherst had need of mystery as a substitute for adventure.) There is also something of her cuteness present (her taste for dainty words like "peeping," for example). Finally there is, at the end, her effort at huge implications. Some of the same qualities are present in these stanzas of a poem by Mrs. Marshall:

Say this to your sorrow,  
Tuck it in your purse,  
Though there be a morrow  
It will not be worse. . . .

Never fear the last breath  
Or the pulse unsteady,

There is no death  
When you have died already.

Mrs. Marshall pleases me best when she contents herself with simple description and does not strive for philosophical overtones.

Here where I walk alone starched juniper lace  
Ripples, and there hangs the tanning tassel of corn,  
Fenceless the grazing fields run into space,  
Mowed sweet shock and freshness out of the earth are borne

As for Mr. Francis, I enjoyed his work best among the three volumes. It's true that I hear through him the voices of many other poets—not only Emily Dickinson but the Frost of *Three Woodchoppers* and the Robinson of *If We Had Known*. But I also hear his own voice and it seems to be both simple and sincere. I hear it in the poem *Sing a Song of Juniper*.

Sing a song of juniper  
Whose song is seldom sung,  
Whose needles prick the finger,  
Whose berries burn the tongue. . .

I hear it in the poem *Indoor Lady*, perhaps the finest in the book.

An indoor lady whom I know  
Laments the lateness of the spring—  
The sun, the birds, the buds so slow,  
The superannuated snow,  
The wind that is possessed to blow . . .

The last poet in this group is Thomas Caldecot Chubb. I hardly feel capable of discussing him as yet, since the tone of his voice has temporarily deafened me. He lacks sensitivity. Now may be a time to speak, but perhaps it should be added, to speak softly. Poetry offers no competition to the guns and bombers that haunt Mr. Chubb's mind. The poem I liked best in this book is a translation "from the Italian of Cecco Angiolari." In this poem, Chubb's native violence is combined with wit, and the result is lighter and altogether better than most of his original work.

Milton Hindus  
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THE SHORT AND THE LONG OF IT

*XI Poems*, by Alan Swallow. The Prairie Press.

*The Virginia Poems*, by Francis Coleman Rosenberger. Gotham Book Mart.

*The Proud People*, by Joseph Joel Keith. The Wings Press.

There's an almost exact inverse proportion between the size and the quality of these three books. Alan Swallow's contains only eleven poems. But for me these are the most interesting. They have an accent and a texture of their own, and give a sense that there is more than meets the ear. If they are the least easy to grasp, at first reading, it is for this very reason. They are not of the type of poems of which it can be said, "Read them once and you have read them before."

It's true that they are uneven; a line like "They slept, whored, slobbered in the mould" will occur in the same poem with "To wake in sunlight, lured and warm." Sometimes the shape of the poem seems too suddenly arrived at. There's an unresolved feeling about the one ending "And your warm body cold beneath my hand," which the very finality of the line serves to emphasize. I am conscious too, here and there, of the attempt to be poetic "Warmed with the crimson flush of blood" is useless except to fill out the meter. All these lapses seem due to a straining for effect, a pushing too far, as in the anticlimax of the lines

. . . . . The fires of stars  
Are dim as embers found in midnight pine,  
Red eyes inflamed against the falling dark.

But good lines and images are frequent: the stars' "handsome light"; the rabbit "soft and bundled"; "The bodies lie, and quietly unbud." And the prosody, if conservative, is not hackneyed.

The length of the lines, for instance, seems dictated by an inner necessity rather than by the preconceptions of convention.

Conventions of one sort or another hamper the writers of the other two books. Francis Coleman Rosenberger too often makes use of long-exhausted "poetic" words like "burning," "quivered," "bereft," and images like "When summer like a fox fled down the hill."

As the book progresses, the poems, "roughly chronological" in order, show increasing capabilities. The themes grow in seriousness; there is a corresponding tension in language and style, until the finest lines, I feel, are reached in the octave of a sonnet on the war, *This Is No Winter's Damage*, ending

The public hurt that with no season came  
Has need of more than summer to be sound.

Even by conventional rhetorical standards, however, the conclusion of the sonnet is disappointing, being neither a contrast nor a culmination, but merely repeating the thought of the first eight lines in rather a listless way.

A poet's influences are always his most dangerous assets. Until he has disentangled himself from his admirations he will tend to write in a style not his own—usually one he can never hope to equal, much less improve upon. Unfortunately, he can more readily achieve a superficial finish in this way; critics who should know better are apt to be "kind" to this sort of thing; he is confirmed in it; thus we get a literary world peopled by minor Frosts, minor Audens, even minor MacLeishes. And we have critics that consistently root for one or another of these so-called "schools"—as if, by sheer force of the number and volume of his followers, Frost, Auden or any other first-rate poet could be exalted above his "competitors."

Some of Joseph Joel Keith's titles—*Words for All Proud People* and *America! You Are the Giver*—will immediately suggest the slick, facile current tradition which he represents at his worst, a singularly played-out tradition in American poetry. By now Whitman's great natural overabundance has degenerated into a kind of cheerleading approach to poetry; his successors whip themselves up into the appropriate mood, and poems are bound to follow. Other poems in Mr. Keith's book, while they never look too deeply, are not always so "superficial all the way through."

Lloyd Frankenberg

A LATIN AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY

12 *Spanish American Poets*, an anthology edited by H. R. Hays, Yale University Press.

One cannot look through the Hays anthology without immediately comparing it with the Dudley Fitts anthology of Latin American poetry which was published last year and to which Mr. Hays contributed the notes on the authors. The arrangement of this new book shows certain improvements. The notes now immediately precede the poems of each author and there is no need to refer to an index. The advantages of dealing with twelve poets instead of ninety-five are obvious. The notes are longer and more interesting, and a group of poems is more representative of an author than one or two poems.

One might take sharp exception to some of the things in the introduction, in which Mr. Hays says that "The lingering influence of modernism constitutes the most striking difference between North American and Spanish American poetry today." This is true; but he goes on to say: "In the background of our [North

American] poetry there are still vestiges of naive optimism, of homespun moralizing, of the Whitmanic disregard for artistic discipline. In contrast, even the most minor Spanish American versifier echoes a sophisticated artistic style and instinctively employs the symbols of European literary tradition." This is all a little too pat. North American poetry is European, even though the influence of French Symbolists, so dominant in Latin American literature, has not left as deep a mark on our poets. As for vestiges of "naive optimism," certainly the contemporary poetry from the theatres of war, to be found in every issue of *POETRY*, is not very optimistic. As to "homespun moralizing," we might well do with a little more of it, and it's one of the things we miss in *12 Spanish American Poets*. And you can find no better example of "disregard for artistic discipline" than that in the poetry of Huidobro, the Chilean, of whom Mr. Hays says, "They [conservative critics] cannot forgive him for the picture poems, his disregard for punctuation, and his fantastic imagery."

To live

To seek

Tied up to the ship

Like a horoscope

The choice of poems is generous and varied in type ranging through the careful classic style of Jorge Luis Borges, of Buenos Aires, the vibrant word pictures of Jorge Carrera Andrade, the Ecuadorian, and the throbbing popular *son* of Nicolás Guillén of Mexico. Following are examples of the work of all three, in that order, with the translations:

Con la tarde  
se cansaron los dos o tres colores del patio.  
La gran franqueza de la luna llena  
ya no entusiasma su habitual firmamento.

At evening  
The two or three colors of the patio grow tired.  
The great frankness of the full moon  
No longer fills its habitual firmament with enthusiasm.  
\* \*

Con escuadras y figuras  
de cándida geometría,  
el espejo de comedor  
edifica.

The dining-room mirror  
Builds  
With squares and figures  
Of snowy geometry.  
\* \*

¿Po qué te pone tan biabo  
cuando te disen negro bembón  
si tiene la boca santa  
negro bembón?

Why get a chip on your shoulder  
When they call you big-lipped Negro  
If that mouth is good for loving,  
Big-lipped Negro?

A glance at the above excerpts will give the average reader some vague idea of the difficulties of the translator. These popular songs, typical of the Afro-Cuban school, are immensely interesting. Hays explains that "The African refrain words are used for their sound value, a typical Afro-Cuban device."

Head and shoulders above all the rest towers the work of Pablo Neruda of Chile whose best-known poem, *Alberto Rojas Jiménez viene volando*, is included. It was written on the death of a young Chilean poet and critic in 1931 and is most moving:

Vienes volando, solo, solitario,  
solo entre muertos, para siempre solo,  
vienes volando sin sombra y sin nombre,  
sin azúcar, sin boca, sin rosales,  
vienes volando.

You come flying, alone, solitary,

Alone among corpses, forever alone,  
You come flying without a shadow, nameless,  
Without sugar, without a mouth, without rosebushes,  
You come flying.

It seems to me that Hays has done a big job very well. It should prove a keen stimulus to North American poets, and a further and necessary aid in their efforts to acquaint themselves with the meticulous work of our southern neighbors.

*Julia Bowe*

## NEWS NOTES

As we go to press word comes that a Liberty Ship soon to be launched at a Richmond, Calif., shipyard is to be named after Harriet Monroe, POETRY's founder and its editor for twenty-three years. We have no more details than this to give, as yet, for we heard about it ourselves for the first time through an item in *The Chicago Sun*. If we receive further information from the Maritime Commission, we'll pass it on in our next issue. It would be interesting to know how it came about and whether Miss Monroe is the first poet to be so honored.

We know at least that Harriet Monroe would be intensely pleased to have a ship named after her. She did not care greatly for busts or plaques or shrines for poets, but a ship is a lively and useful form of monument. There is a pleasing appropriateness in giving the name of a poet whose interests were as world-wide as hers were to such a vital link in global communication. Naturally it makes us feel proud to hear of this recognition of the importance of Miss Monroe's life work as poet and editor of POETRY.

We think she would find a different but equally important sense of reward for her efforts in behalf of poetry in reading some of the letters we get these days from men in the armed services, here and abroad, testifying to the value they put on the magazine, not as a milestone of contemporary literature, but as something to be read and enjoyed today. For example, this comment about the magazine, from a private first class, is our most heartwarming recent testimonial. "Please enter my subscription to your magazine. When I was just a private I thought that I couldn't afford such a luxury. With four dollars more a month, I know it is a necessity, not a luxury."

John Peale Bishop, poet, critic and novelist, has been appointed Fellow

of the Library of Congress in Comparative Literature for the year 1943-44, Archibald MacLeish, the Librarian of Congress, announced last month.

A native of Charles Town, West Va., where he spent his boyhood, Mr. Bishop was graduated from Princeton University in 1917. He served in the World War as first lieutenant of infantry with the 33rd Infantry and the 309th Headquarters Troop of the 84th Division.

Norman Rosten of Brooklyn has received the 1943 Lola Ridge Memorial Award of one hundred dollars for a group of five *Poems for Our Time*. A second prize of twenty-five dollars was awarded to Margaret R. Richter of Los Angeles for her *Elegy for a Lost Continent*. The awards are made by S. A. DeWitt of New York through the Poetry Society of America. The committee of judges were: Alfred Kreymborg, chairman, president of the Poetry Society; Leonora Speyer, honorary vice-president; and Louise Townsend Nicholl. About 300 poems were submitted in the annual competition.

Mr. Rosten has written many verse plays for the radio and has had two plays produced in New York. He won a Guggenheim Fellowship for poetry in 1941-1942, and at present is working on a film about the United Nations. His *Return Again, Traveler* was published in the Yale Series of Younger Poets.

*Voices* announces three awards for 1944: a prize of one hundred and fifty dollars for the best group of poems to appear in the magazine; a prize of one hundred dollars for the best single poem; a prize of fifty dollars for the best review or article appearing in the magazine in the winter, spring, summer and autumn issues. The address of *Voices* is 687 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y.

The Poetry Society of Georgia announces a series of prizes, ranging from ten to fifty dollars, to be awarded during the early months of 1944. For information address Mrs. P. N. Strong, Vernon View, Savannah, Ga. While it will be rather late for any of our readers to submit entries for the earlier prizes (deadline January 15) offered for specific subjects, such as nature and the sea, some may be interested in the Barrow Prize of fifty dollars which is offered for the best poem on any subject. Entries for this prize must be received by April 15.

Alfred A. Knopf announces two \$2,500 fellowships for 1944, one in the field of history and one in the field of biography. No fiction award will be made. The purpose of the fellowships is to assist writers in completing projected books. Applications must reach the Knopf office by June 1, 1944. For further information write Knopf, 501 Madison Ave., N. Y. C. 22.

Four awards in dramatic writing are offered in the ninth annual competitions of the Dramatists' Alliance of Stanford University. The late Stephen Vincent Benét is remembered in a new prize for radio plays in prose or verse, preferably on American themes; the award is fifty dollars and recommendation to radio production units. Other awards are the

Anderson Prize of one hundred dollars for verse drama, in full length or one-act form; the Etherege award for full-length comedy, also one hundred dollars; and the Gray award for dramatic criticism, which brings twenty-five dollars and recommendation to standard periodicals. The most produceable of the dramas offered for the Anderson and Etherege prize will be staged by the Hillbarn Theatre, in northern California. The final date for the present series of competitions is March 15, 1944. Address all inquiries and contributions to Dramatists' Alliance, Box 200 Z, Stanford University, Calif.

The Harriet Monroe Poetry Group is again holding its fall and winter meetings. Amos N. Wilder, talking on *New England Poetry Today*, and Jeremy Ingalls, reading from her own poetry, have appeared recently. John Frederick Nims, reading his poems, and Charles Allen, speaking on the little magazines, are among those scheduled for the near future. The meetings, which are held in the afternoon at the Harriet Monroe Library of Modern Poetry at the University of Chicago, are under the direction of Judith Bond, who has been in charge of the library since its dedication in 1938. It has recently moved to new quarters on the campus, and now occupies, with the Rare Book Room, the west tower of the Harper Library Building. We want again to call this stimulating series, as well as the Harriet Monroe Library itself, to the attention of Chicagoans and prospective visitors to the city. Miss Bond will be happy to furnish more specific information on request.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MURIEL RUKEYSER is the well-known author of three books of poetry, *Theory of Flight*, *U. S. 1*, and *A Turning Wind*, and a biography, *Willard Gibbs, American Genius*, which was published in 1942. A new book of her poems, *Beast in View*, will be brought out by Doubleday, Doran in April. Miss Rukeyser was an associate editor of the magazine *Decision*. She has been awarded our Oscar Blumenthal Prize and the Harriet Monroe Award of Honor given by the University of Chicago. She lives in New York City.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, the distinguished poet-physician who lives in Rutherford, N. J., is one of POETRY's most familiar contributors. He was awarded our Guarantors Prize in 1931. The most recent of his many volumes, which include both poetry and prose, is *The Broken Span*, which was published by New Directions.

OSCAR WILLIAMS, of New York City, has appeared often in POETRY and other periodicals, and is the author of two books of poems, the more recent of which is *The Man Coming Toward You*. He has edited three volumes of the *New Poems* series, the last one of which appeared in 1943.



RUTH LECHLITNER, of Cold Springs, N. Y., has appeared widely in POETRY and other magazines, and is the author of a volume of poems, *Tomorrow's Phoenix*.

GABRIELA MISTRAL, well-known in South America since the publication of her *Sonetos de la muerte* in 1914, is at present employed in the Chilean consular service in Brazil. She taught at Barnard and Middlebury Colleges in 1931, and in 1932 was Visiting Professor of Spanish Studies at the University of Puerto Rico. She appeared in our Latin American issues of June, 1925, and May, 1943.

RICHARD O'CONNELL is a graduate of the Yale Department of Drama. With James Graham Luján he translated a series of Lorca's plays which was published by Scribner's under the title *From Lorca's Theatre*, and a book by the Uruguayan novelist Enrique Amorim, *The Horse and His Shadow*. He is a lieutenant serving with the American mountain artillery.

JAMES GRAHAM LUJAN, aside from his collaborations with Mr. O'Connell, has been a dancer with various ballet companies. He is of Mexican and Scotch descent. He is also at present in the Army.

PRESTON NEWMAN, of Blacksburg, Va., where he is an instructor in English at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, was introduced to our readers in January, 1943. He has appeared in *The Lyric*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, etc. He is thirty years old.

EVA TRIEM was born in New York City, educated at the University of California, and now lives in Dubuque, Iowa. She has appeared before in POETRY.

DOROTHY COWLES PINKNEY was born in New Rochelle, N. Y. She has published poems in POETRY, Harper's, etc. She won the Poetry Society of America award of a hundred dollars in 1933.

HARVEY CURTIS WEBSTER was born in Chicago in 1906, and at present teaches contemporary literature and creative writing at the University of Louisville. He has published criticism in POETRY, as well as in various other magazines, but this is his first appearance here as poet.

The following six poets appear here for the first time:

EDWARD FENTON writes of his poem, *Parley in Algiers*: "It is one of a group written in the past year and a half during my time with the 8th Army in the Middle East." Other poems of his have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The American Mercury* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

FLORENCE KERR BROWNELL was born in Buffalo, and has lived in

Colorado and California, on the Maine coast, and a year in Europe. At present she lives in Port Chester, N. Y.

JOHN HALL, of London, is well known among the young British poets, having appeared widely in magazines and anthologies in England.

IRVING WEXLER was born twenty-five years ago in Brooklyn, and attended Brooklyn College, where he majored in biology. After his graduation he worked as a bacteriologist, and enlisted in the Army in 1941. He is now a sergeant. For almost two years he has traveled around the world on a troop transport, as a pharmacist's mate.

JEROME H. WEISSER was born in 1922 in New York City. He is at present in the English department at Columbia.

JAY WEST is a young newspaperman in Kingsport, Tenn. This is his first magazine appearance.

All of our prose contributors except Mr. Crowder have appeared before:

JOSEPHINE MILES is the author of two books of poems, *Lines at Inter-section* and *Poems on Several Occasions*. At present she teaches at the University of California, where she is also engaged in research in poetic vocabulary. RICHARD CROWDER writes "At present I am on a year's leave of absence from Purdue University, where I have been teaching English for six years. I'm spending my time here at the State University of Iowa trying to polish off a long-delayed Ph.D." MARIAN CASTLEMAN is a graduate of the University of Chicago, and at present lives in New York. JULIA BOWE is a Chicagoan who last appeared in our Latin American number. MILTON HINDUS is an instructor in English at Hunter College, New York. LLOYD FRANKENBERG has appeared in *The Forum*, *The London Mercury*, etc., and is the author of a book of poems, *The Red Kite*, which was published by Farrar and Rinehart. He lives at present in Powellsville, Md.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ORIGINAL VERSE

*Poems, 1923-1943*, by James Daly. The Dryden Press, N. Y. C.

*Map of My Country*, by John Holmes. Duell Sloan & Pearce.

*Sunrise on the Rio Grande*, by Grace Baer Hollowell. Priv. ptd.

*Six Dance Movements in Words*, by Leetha Journey Hofeller. Ward Ritchie Press.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

*Louder Than the Drum*, by Gerard Previn Meyer. League to Support Poetry, N. Y. C.

*The Sealed Well*, by Grant C. Knight. Fine Editions Press, N. Y. C.

*Remember Pearl Harbor*, by Amy Freeman Lee. Fine Editions Press

*Free Enterprise*, by Mary Ballard Duryee. Fine Editions Press.

*With Trope and Melody*, by Herman Eugene Kittredge. Banner Press, Emory Univ., Ga.

*Hills of Hope*, by Velma Lea Toney. Underhill Press, Beebe, Ark.

*Living in the Sun*, by William Sheppard Sparks. Shaw Pub. Co., Washington, D. C.

*Poetic Ramblings*, by Herbert H. Tocklin. William-Frederick Press, N.Y.C.

### TRANSLATIONS AND PROSE:

*Coronal*, by Paul Claudel. Trans. by Sister Mary David. Pantheon Books, N. Y. C.

*The Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. by Wilfred Myatt. Bruce Humphries, Boston.

# P O E T R Y

## *A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

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### FIVE POEMS

#### LOVE LETTER FROM AN IMPOSSIBLE LAND

COMBED by the cold seas, Bering and Pacific,  
These are the exile islands of the mind.  
All the charts and history you can muster  
Will not make them real as the fog is real  
Or crystal as a certain hour is clear  
If you can wait.

Write to me often, darling.

Thrown up hurriedly for a late-crossing people,  
These are unsettled mountains where I walk,  
They dance at the center still and spout new ash;  
The teeming salmon remember in their courses  
When they were not, and the winds run into the hills  
By an old habit.

Now I am convinced there is nothing to fear,  
Now on these islands you are all I want;  
They shake and change and finally enchant;  
But I have wished you a bawdy darling and here  
Often, I, rootless and needing a quick home.

Here I have seen such singular strange visions,  
So moving strong in beauty  
You would not believe them, no  
Not if your very lover told you so  
At night remembering, stirred in my sleep at night.

One was, in the orange time of morning,  
The smoking peak Shishaldin in a glory;  
(Eastward I saw, oh, I remember eastward  
Pavlof, the black volcano, throwing flame  
At night to seaward, when beacons were forbidden.)  
Empedocles' element, neither earth nor fire;  
And when I put a wing across the cone  
(Snowy, and striking deeply at the memory),  
It drew me, too, driven and weary  
What with the war, and those foolish citizens my thoughts.

Another, the humorless mounds, the kitchen middens  
Built in the painful winds that blow forever.  
Watch the slow procession laying them down  
(An almond-eyed people, parent to Incas and Indians)  
Shell upon shell, bone upon bone, until  
See they have builded there a little hill!  
A thousand years, seated by this cold harbor, eating fish,  
In what was to prove only a delaying action.

You are one for the day I landed there in sunshine,  
Porcelain little village with your white Russian church,  
Your fareyed children and hollow-barking malemutes  
That romp on the beach, cluttered with boats and flowers.  
When was June gentleness set in so alien a land,  
In a calendar with so few sunny saints?

A moon miracle are the milky hills at night  
With streamers of snow dancing in the moon at the summits,  
An ageless dance with the peculiar rhythm of zero,  
And the wind creaking like a green floe.

And now I write you from such another vision.

As the haunted men who wrestle a weariness  
Or women who languish from no sickness known  
In books a century back, am I alone  
In the sheer time of hilltop happiness.  
Deft on the harbor I have put behind  
The lovely grey vessels for their battles wait.  
Twenty-four blue sailors anticipate  
Orders of drill that drift up on the wind.  
And stiff on the apron are the pretty planes  
That waddle to the water and drum away,  
Leaving me stammerer, inept to say  
Why in their simple duty there is pain.

You will see in this passage I am wanting you.

Providence occurs to me;  
I will salvage these parts of a loud land

For symbols of war its simple works and duties  
Against when, like the hut-two-three-four sailors  
Disbanded into chaos by Fall-out,  
I shall resume my several tedious parts,  
In an old land, with people reaching backward like many curtains,  
Possessing a mystery beyond the mist of mountains,  
Ornate beyond the ritual of snow.

The moth sky of evening and the moth sea  
Linger into night and coupling sleep.  
Sleep for us here is a leaping down safely in silk  
From the flaming bull's-eye plane of day,  
Stricken ship that twists and thirsts for the metal sea.  
We lie in khaki rows, no two alike,  
Needing to be called by name  
And saying women's names.

Now the moth descends, but when the dove?  
God keep us whole and true, my distant love.

QUARTET IN F MAJOR

Great Beethoven, you trouble me this watchful night  
singing again again how sweet it is  
this freedom, how wild it is this fight,  
singing how cunning are these enemies.

Like a white northland, icy-white and flying  
are the aspirations that scrape these chill strings,  
and are not tune nor harmony nor a wild sighing,  
but strings only that hope, having known singing.

Taut strings, by whom were you taught this wisdom  
that returns on itself with such insistence  
and urges love and singing for a kingdom?

I have heard the single answer of the instruments:  
Beethoven, Beethoven only among ghosts  
instructs the four strings, haunts my night-strange post.

#### REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM BLUES

Oh, the soldier he wants to be somewhere he once was,  
Or he wants to be somewhere nobody's ever been;  
The eyes of his girl shine for eight months behind his eyes,  
The unpocked lawn of home is green in his dreams.

Oh, the sailor he thinks of a roadhouse that never was,  
He remembers a strictly mythical girl called Grace  
Who dances too close and knows the answers to everything,  
In his fat green wallet in dreams he sees her face.

Oh, they wanna go back to wherever it was they were,  
Or they wanna go on to where they were promised they'd go,  
Before the sea's sound or the shell-loud air  
Has a claim, has robbed their dreams of home.

#### IN STRANGE EVENTS

If the moon set, and all the stars, and still no morning came, or  
If the wise few books turned changeling on the shelf, or  
If the dirty-minded enemy in such numbers came  
That parleying (god forbid) seemed prudent,  
Where would I then turn, Oh, where would I turn then?



Men have burned hotter than stars for a lasting name, and  
The books of memory are nowadays rainy-faint, and  
Only the hatred of the dirty-minded enemy, only  
This one face of the spinning god I always own,  
(Friends can die and worse, and)  
Remains white-hot and clear, so  
I'd keep my very hate of this, if this or this, or  
This were to come, were to come suddenly now.

TEN-DAY LEAVE

*For N.K.M. and W.M.M.*

House that holds me, household that I hold dear,  
Woman and man at the doorway, come what will  
Hospitable, more than you know I enter here,  
In retreat, in laughter, in the need of your love still.

More perhaps than you fancy, fancy finds  
This room with books and answers in the walls;  
I have continual reference to the lines  
I learned here early, later readings false.

More than you dream, I wake from a special dream  
To nothing but remorse for miles around,  
And steady my bed at this unchanging scene  
When the changing dogs dispute a stranger town.

Oh, identity is a traveling-piece with some,  
But here is what calls me, here what I call home.

*William Meredith*

## STANDARDS

And what if I weren't born, said the son.  
If you weren't born, said the father.  
Yes, if I weren't born, if that was not the night,  
    said the son.  
If that was not the night, said the father.  
If she happened to be someone else, I mean. If  
    it was in another city, another country, said the son.  
If it was in another country, said the father.  
Of even if you were someone else, and she was the same,  
    said the son.  
If she were the same, said the father.  
And the time was spring, and not winter, or the Month August,  
    not December, said the son.  
Not December, said the father.  
If all these, said the son.  
If all these, said the father.  
  
Yes, if all these, would you be a happy man today,  
    said the son.  
I am happy, said the father.

*Saul Gottlieb.*

ON A BAROQUE SCREEN

FOUR POEMS FROM SOUTH AMERICA

SIESTA IN CARTAGENA

The city lies, *en cabochon*,  
A black and white Dominican dawn  
Gives way to balconies of heat  
Down a cerise street,  
Mingled everywhere, the smell  
Of jasmine, Flit and tuberoses,  
Under a baroque shell.

("Interesante, muy interesante,"  
Cornelia, murmuring Berlitz,  
Longs for the stiffened coolness  
Of the Ritz.)

With negroid lips upon the reliquary,  
Gaudy and soft, the imitation stone,  
Ever ascending, Queen of the Heavens, Mary  
By sweet colonial breezes, blown.

San Pedro Claver realized stone would melt  
Before the heart of man. He saw the slave,  
Lashed to the grave. He felt  
The irons upon *his* wrist, *he* knew the stave.

(Shakes out her camisole, loosens her stays.  
Her *via crucis* lies in pleasant ways.)

While on the cliff, in reeling light,  
Covents, like blackened vultures, swoop and bite.

MADRUGADA, QUITENÑA

Jaime, the delivery boy  
Runs down the streets of Quito,  
The silver streets of Quito  
At five a. m.  
While the gilt moon dances,  
Liberated  
From the Virgin's toe  
And Her white-embroidered hem.

Down the dusty mountain  
An Indian driver  
Calls to his wandering,  
Sleepy mules.  
And vague street cleaners  
Comb the cobbles,  
Sweeping the dirt into  
Firefly pools.

The maids are in the kitchen,  
Scratching with a broom,  
Blowing on the charcoal,  
Rubbing on a pan.  
The shriek of a parrot—  
The siren of a rooster—  
And morning spreads  
Her sudden yellow fan.

Sculptured in sorrow,  
Wrapped in a doorway,

Three Indians wake to  
A convent gong.  
The nuns of Santa Clare and  
The monks of San Francisco  
Chorus the day  
With Latin song.

But the organ's groan  
And the shivering matins  
Rise to the golden roof  
And die,  
While seven volcanoes,  
Sugar-white volcanoes,  
Hammer the blue of  
An insane sky.

DETAIL FROM A CUZCO PICTURE

No Inca discipline of wall  
Nor stroke of granite in the street  
Can break this weave of arms or still  
These throbbing, adolescent feet.

A timeless augury of love,  
Archaic smile and widened eyes,  
Herr Bumel, with a *Guía Azul*,  
Would have it so, to his surprise.

In vain San Cristóbal expends  
A disapproving baroque frown.

Around them light, like broken flowers  
Thrown from above, comes shredding down.

Born of an afternoon, they pass,  
One figure to the plaza's sun.  
Herr Bumel turns and slowly walks  
Home to his *media-pension*.

SOR JOSEFA

After devotionals, she flew  
Up twenty narrow steps and locked the door,  
Drew from a cupboard, parchment that bore  
The tracks of pen, and with uplifted face  
Wrote down the whisperings of Grace  
Until the ecstatic music spoke no more.

The cell closed in, the stiffened hand relaxed.  
Doubt, like a shadow in the corner, moved.  
Was this the World? This, Sin? She taxed  
A heart that had immoderately loved  
The kiss of silk, the sensuous breath of flowers.  
Before her rose the Cross, stood darkened hours.

Only at midnight, waking from the dead;  
A stencil of red drops around her head,  
She crossed the empty room, took up her pen,  
Hearing above night's immanence, the far  
And unmistakable music sound again,  
Te Deum from a penitential star.

*Daniel Catton Rich*

PROTHALAMION

If in the beginning it was brief  
The handclasp and the seeking smile  
There was no signpost nor an arrow.  
The beginning was also an end,  
And the end was the setting forth, at first  
The journey imperceptible  
Like slow drift of river current, hand  
Swirling slowly over canoe in water  
And the slim reeds brushing the side  
With faint rustle, whisper of movement  
Caught by ear. In end was beginning  
Like night merging with day  
Dawn twilight and ending dark  
Yet beginning light depending on  
The prospect or the retrospect.  
Night memories clinging are sweet.  
Day's prospect is the sunshine riant  
And You are strangely sunshine.

Yes, the beginning began in the ending  
And I knew nothing that there was ending  
Or beginning or even might be middle.

Now it is daytime and I see  
That it was an ending and yet  
In ending another beginning  
Cycle on cycle, the valved procession,  
The meridian sliding east or the planet  
Burning with gold and life in Westing.

Endless beginnings I bring and You  
Are the beginning's end, the goal,  
Repository, sea of life,  
The spreading sky, and the last homecoming.  
Yes the final pilgrimage winds home  
The soldier to cast the rifle aside  
The sailor to leave the slack-moored ship  
The sea and her wide dangerous smile  
To watch the peaceful grass acclaim  
The alchemy of water, sun and flame.

*John M. Poole*



TWO POEMS

STRANGERS

Who is he in the hard city, emissary  
On a forgotten errand,  
Moving hound-like along the arteries  
Stormy with traffic, tiptoeing  
Over mill, tower and tenement  
Scenting trails lost to others?  
What events is he about?

Who is he, the anonymous  
Lineman climbing the poles, tinkering  
With the live wires, opening  
And closing unmeasured circuits,  
Switching ultimate rays  
At whose touch things bloom suddenly  
With a cool white fluorescence?

How old is  
The future man in his reticence,  
The stranger  
In the audience of selves,  
The far voice  
At the other end of the live wire of time?

THE MAN WITH THE PLOUGH

His world by day, his world by night,  
His stretch of acres, green or white:

A husbandman at his diurnal  
Affairs with things which are eternal,  
As were the first men at their ploughs  
Of scrawny roots or twisted boughs—  
Human with deities as neighbors  
Who knew their ways and shared their labors.  
"His range is small," so friends maintain—  
A tiller who on his domain,  
From gravel road to pasture bar,  
Deals with a planet and its star.

*Israel Newman*

### LUCRETIVS

Lucretius, starting from the exquisite  
Languor of venery, looked round and said,  
"Was that an earthquake tremor, or was it  
Only a fickle atom in my head?"  
Such answer as Lucretius might have made  
Himself, and had in thought begun to make,  
Was not forthcoming; idle language strayed  
Beyond his ears and made him feel opaque.  
Leaving the woman's gateway, he bestowed  
A noncommittal look upon a cat,  
Wondered if rain would penetrate the road  
And just how much, picked up a pebble, spat,  
Squinted his eyes to blur a nearby light,  
Felt rather lonely, and went home to write.

*William Michaux*

THREE POEMS

AUTUMN OUT OF SUMMER

In the sultry August weather yesterday  
I heard the first nut strike the barn roof, knew  
The infallible hickory would fetch with this,  
As in all years that I remember, autumn,  
But had forgot his full art, how he could  
Invoke in one night autumn out of summer,  
Until I saw the morning hyaline  
And the trees furbished, felt the blade of air,  
Its edge restored, now good for cutting with

WINTER FROST

The silver ferns unfold their fronds  
There is no copper in the bronze  
With which the garden hill's embossed  
In this white jungle of the frost,  
This metal forest, you can see  
Precisions of the sudden tree,  
Whose seed sown in the earth of air,  
Found April and found August there  
Without duration    Winter's loins  
And incandescent ardor joins  
Conception, birth, maturity,  
In the same instant in this tree,  
As if from spring in one green stroke  
Burst acorn and the centuried oak

## MUSIC

Exhale your vapor, fallen snow,  
And fashion from your breath the fog,  
Ceiling me in with cry of crow  
And the dim bay of dog

Those lonely syllables have been  
Rich music in this room before,  
Mingled, immured with me between  
White wall and weightless door

*Kenneth Slade Alling*

TWO POEMS

DRILL SHED

The passive motion of sand  
Is fluid geometry Fir needles  
Are the cool, select thoughts of madmen, and  
Like a beggar the wind wheedles  
Pine cones from the pines  
Inside there's no violence  
Only the silence  
Of an empty church,  
Drilled zygotes shift  
From foot to foot or lurch  
With half-closed eyes against the guns  
While the ack-eye shows  
With delphic joy  
The deeper things a dial sight knows,  
Curious now  
I marvel how  
Lord Euclid's dream  
Can stiffen a boy

NEWSBOY

Neither tribal nor trivial he shouts  
From the city's center where tramcars move  
Like stained bacilli across the eyeballs,  
Where people spore in composite buildings  
From their protective gelatine of doubts,  
Old ills, and incapacity to love

While he, a Joshua before their walls,  
Sells newspapers to the gods and geldings

Intrusive as a collision, he is  
The Zeitgeist's too public interpreter,  
A voice multiplex and democratic,  
The people's voice or the monopolists,  
Who with last-edition omniscience  
Plays Clotho to each gaping customer  
With halcyon colt, sex crime in an attic,  
The story of a twice-jailed bigamist

For him the mitred cardinals sweat in  
Conclaves domed, the spy is shot   Empiric,  
And obstreperous confidant of kings,  
Rude despiser of the anonymous,  
Danubes of blood wash up his bulletins  
While he domesticates disaster like  
A wheat in pampas of prescriptive things  
With cries animal and ambiguous

His dialectics will assault the brain,  
Contrive men to voyages or murder,  
Dip the periscope of their public lives  
To the green levels of acidic caves,  
Fever their health, or heal them with ruin,  
Or with lies dangerous as a letter  
Finally to enwrap the season's cloves,  
Cover a somnolent face on Sundays

*Irving Layton*

HOSPITAL ROOM

We need not rudely waken  
Nor lie in loneliness  
Through the deep and secret night  
Memory is divided with someone at  
Birth, later confused by swans and  
Fountains in baroque    Who would be  
Found sleepless in Italian scenery,  
Fondling an iron deer?

Fear is only the brain swelling  
Like a frog to emulate the bull  
Of darkness    The cat has fear in  
The house, the fly on the wall,  
Perhaps at its level the flower  
Turns pale    These fables cannot  
Seriously impair the immense,  
Unringing, peopleless night

Pain is too profoundly shared to  
Disengage you from the sleeping  
World    The marauder on every roof  
Howls the separate, the nighthaunted,  
Into the common fold    we learn to  
Huddle against the drawn lips

Only those impaled by some special  
Terror or compassion need toss on  
The horns of the late and lonely  
Night    The wound is collective  
It bleeds at the jagged edge

*Don Gordon*

## IN HOSPITAL

With the invading ills my virtues fight,  
Pain is so pointed that I almost am  
Detached at least I can observe the night  
Across whose soft and mellow face the sharp  
Stars and the polished palm leaves shake their light

The night, whose being seems so trivial,  
Whose beauty, framed by arches of the blanched  
Balcony, looks irrelevant and small  
And yet I know that what is dwarfing it  
Is not the outrage of the pain at all

Nature is given the significance  
It has in certain novels, at the back  
Of conversations, crouched behind a dance,  
It is the shabby but essential setting  
For what must be unfolded, what must chance

Suppose that I should die in this small town—  
Here is the thought that withers what I see  
I imagine negroes always walking down  
The market road with their bright fishes and  
Night after night of heat and that stellar crown

And my life finished Thinking above the pain,  
The dark wind blowing on me from the palms,  
This seems so simple simple, too, the plain  
Meaning behind the novels and the port,  
And that behind my thin thread here, the skein

*Roy Fuller*



TWO POEMS

THIS IS THE COUNTRY, YES

This is the country, yes, toward which they shouldered  
the daily suns, at dusk put off their packs  
among the everflowing forest-whispers  
with sunset floundering in the lakes

On fields burnished by noon  
sprouting promise like wheat ears  
they halted, husked the soil for ripeness  
with lean plow    secured their roof

This is their children's land  
the double winter of human agency,  
insecurity's ague, chills that eat us poor  
Hopes gaunt in kennel no longer trace  
that once warm scent, love's quiet early deer

Blue the Minnesota spring  
grassblown, familiar sweet and strange,  
and migratory birds each year succeed  
to quell the nameless winter fear  
The dead here made their choice,  
we too must choose—  
dispel the frost of spirit and come forth  
under the strange, familiar trees of home

LISTEN, FOR I HAVE KEPT A FANATIC HEART

Listen, for I have kept  
A fanatic heart  
Age cannot recover  
From a young man's hurt  
Though I get old,  
Eden sun's not set,  
My fanatic heart  
Still walks mad in it

When we came to the mountain,  
The desert huge beneath,  
That slow dragging wind  
Was god's labored breath,  
Creating, not creation—  
All is in the starts,  
And the goal nothing  
To fanatic hearts.

*Ray Smith*

THREE POEMS

FABLE OF THE ANT AND THE WORD

Ink-black, but moving independently  
Across the black and white parquet of print,  
The ant cancels the author out    The page,  
Translated to itself, bears hair-like legs  
Disturbing the fine hairs of its fiber  
These are the feet of summer, pillaging meaning,  
Despoiling Alexandria    Sunlight is silence  
Laying waste all languages, until, thinly,  
The fictional dialogue begins again  
The page goes on telling another story

HEIGHT IS THE DISTANCE DOWN

What's geography?    What difference what mountain  
It is?    In the intimacy of this altitude  
Its discolored snowfields overhang half the world

On a knife-rim edge-up into whirlpools of sky,  
Feet are no anchor    Gravity sucks at the mind  
Spinning the blood-weighted body head downward.

The mountain that had become a known profile  
On the day's horizon is a gesture of earth  
Swinging us above falling spaces, above  
A map of the world    Disturber of the unseen,  
Provoker of the gusts in which we bend

Struggling against destruction gaping eastward.  
The wind fails The breath held The illusion of death  
The resisting shoulder unopposed lurches  
West in innocent still air, as steep, as deep

#### CROSSROADS

Rotting in the wet gray air  
The railroad depot stands deserted under  
Still green trees In the fields  
Cold begins an end,

There were other too-long-postponed departures.  
They left, finally, because of well water  
Gone rank, the smell of fungus, the chill  
Of rain in chimneys.

The place is abandoned even in memory  
They knew, locking doors upon empty houses,  
To leave without regret is to lose  
Title to one home forever.

*Mary Barnard*

FOR US NO MORE IN EPIC ENCOUNTER

For us no more in epic encounter  
The physical joy of the Iliad  
The faith of the Paradiso  
(Steel structure of Thomas Aquinas)  
Now no more Aegean or Mediterranean  
Blind Maeonides and the exiled Florentine  
Moving assured in worlds they could understand,  
Rather for us the Virgilian indecision  
The *lacrimae rerum* and the question unanswered

But you would have understood us  
You knew our loneliness, the wild around us,  
The dragon in the dark and the fiend in the fenland,  
Death in all its shapes and desolation  
In bog and moor and the inimical sea,  
Weird waiting without, and the heart yet unappalled

Our bleak promontory the mists encircle,  
We who are heroes  
Not by choice but mere chronology  
Lug the machine gun to the dismal beach  
And await the onset of a heroic age

*Ian A Gordon*

### THREE POEMS

#### X-RAY

Bending above the glass Sweet bones, I said,  
Pelvis, more elegant than living hips,  
Curved ribs that touch like tentative finger-tips,  
I shall not be ashamed of my body, a long time dead.

Clean clavicle, with your dependent spine,  
Gracefully graded, like a string of pearls,  
I pity all the young and hostile girls  
Who have not traced the vertebra's design,

Nor seen the line of flesh like ectoplasm  
Make ready momentarily to fall apart,  
While under the vanished breasts the nebulous heart  
And legendary lungs swoon in their chasm

These are not real I knew it even in youth  
Hot with fever or love, but never real  
I have brought the doctor less than a lie to heal  
And the Roentgen ray has told me more than the truth

#### BIRD HAVEN MORNING

The cardinal, who slept too long  
High in his murmuring summer tree,  
Forgets his glorious threadbare song  
Daily rehearsed At half past three

While violet velvet curtains rise  
And yellow footlights rim the east,  
Two wary whistling notes he tries  
Unready as a drunken priest

The catbird stutters    From the spruce  
The wedded mourning doves begin  
With hoarse, extemporaneous coos  
To mourn another morning in

Cock pheasants toot    The grackles croak  
Dim orioles spin a wavering thread  
Ten warblers from the hollow oak  
Go tumbling tuneful out of bed

The grumbling screech owl wipes his bill  
Furred with a night of moths and mice  
Regains his attic windowsill  
And draws the shutters of his eyes

POLITICAL ARGUMENT

Your lance against the shoulder-blade  
My Picador, how well you thrust!  
And little blood you drew, but just  
Enough to make me see the red  
So charging down the esplanade  
Of every topic we discussed  
With steaming breath I pawed the dust  
And gored the Matador instead

Caught on the horn the bloody cloak  
Is spangled with his death and mine  
So perish all the simple folk  
Entangled in the Party Line  
While hat on breast the guilty cause  
Takes self-possessed the wild applause

*Jessica Nelson North*



## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POETICS

THE importance which we generally grant to the concept of self-expression in art is relatively new. For over two thousand years, from the age of Homer to the eighteenth century, the vast majority of European writers and artists was mainly concerned with imitation, that is to say with conforming to some standards or norms of expression, and with the avoidance of any too striking originality. Even obscurity, in the poetry of such Alexandrine Greeks as Lycophron, of the Italian or French Petrarchans or of the English Metaphysical school, tended to be a learned obscurity which could be decoded by referring to a number of extraneous and available sources of knowledge rather than to an analysis of the individual poet's psychological peculiarities and personal experiences. And such a conception of poetry led to the use, within each age and school, of a relatively public language which was rather the vocabulary of poetry than that of the individual poet. Of course, each poet tended, consciously or unconsciously, to adapt this language to his particular needs of self-expression according to a more or less private formula. But there were, except for a few freaks such as some of the Provençal troubadours of the obscure school, a few mystics and some eccentrics like Edward Benlowes, no private languages of poetry such as we have seen appear so frequently in recent years.

With the eighteenth century, however, a new and more liberal trend appeared, together with the dissolution of the old esthetic order of absolute classicism. The origins of this new trend were many and obscure, and it is not our purpose to analyze them here. But Western poets had begun to discover whole

bodies of poetry which did not conform to known classical standards the works of pseudo-Ossian, the Eddas, popular folk poetry, or Oriental poetry And because poets could not perceive that this poetry conformed perhaps as rigidly to other standards, they attributed its peculiarities to a greater freedom in self-expression and to a more unruly imagination which apparently allowed greater originality Poetry then began to depart from the conventions of a public language and of generally available subject matter And today, the average Western poet—I mean the creative poet who sets himself high standards rather than the more or less naive or commercial versifier—has lapsed into a practice of obscurity and into the use of private languages whose only key is often the intimate biography of the individual artist The tradition of established conventions has been, to a great extent, replaced by a tradition of unconventionality We have fewer great minds with average personalities, such as Chaucer, but more and more poets who dye their hair green, who periodically relapse into insanity, who are eccentric in their manners, their morals or their politics, and it is increasingly important, in order to understand their work, that one should know and understand their peculiarities Indeed, the less accessible poet, in our times, actually has more chances of acquiring a steady group of admirers than the poet who eschews personal obscurity and strives towards more public utterance

Nor is this trend peculiar to diction or to poetry It can be observed in subject matter too, in plot and character, even in the more commercial arts, such as journalism, where the shift of interest from general experience to individual, peculiar and personal impressions, is perhaps most noticeable Our war correspondents, instead of giving a clear report of their subject

matter, say, of a campaign as it revealed itself to all the participants, will rather stress the particular impressions of a few individual observers, combatants or refugees whose more or less confused or incorrect versions will be presented as typical. *They Were Expendable* thus describes the whole Philippines campaign in terms of the individual experiences, emotions and impressions of a very small group of combatants who manned our PT boats. Much of the book is only indirectly relevant to its main purpose, that of describing a military campaign and the nature of being expendable, the reader is offered whole passages of "human interest" which describe experiences and emotions which are not peculiar to this war nor indeed to being expendable. The book's narrators remain objective and factual only as long as they are describing events which one or the other of them actually witnessed. But as soon as they must fill gaps with hearsay, a subjective and often resentful tone creeps into their narrative, for instance in their barely-veiled suspicion that one of their group may have neglected his duty when he availed himself of an opportunity to escape to Australia. This reliance on gossip, rumor or subjective suspicion prevents such a book from being an objective historical account of a campaign and, together with the insistence on purely personal experiences, such as a love affair with a nurse, relegates it rather to the category of "true confessions." In such a presentation, rumor and misinterpretation, in fact all the error inherent in unchecked individual experience and haphazard interpretation, tend to become as important and significant as facts which can be ascertained by checking the impressions of one man against those of hundreds of other participants. This is public subject matter reduced to the level of private experience, in the same way as Stendhal once described

Waterloo, in *La Chartreuse de Parme*, where his hero, Fabrice, sees only a few peripheral and almost insignificant aspects of the great battle. And the same trend can be observed in hundreds of recent books. In Henry Cassidy's *Moscow Dateline* a lot of space is devoted to the journalist's purely personal goings-on, to his poker games with the staff of the American Embassy and his private life in general, at the end of the book the reader knows as much about Cassidy's friends, other foreign correspondents such as Larry Lesueur, as about Stalin or general conditions in wartime Russia.

And yet all this is apparently what the reader, in our time, is most anxious to find in his readings: the personal touch, however irrelevant, however erroneous, however private, banal or obscure. For this there are complex psychological reasons, of which this essay can analyze only a few. The reader, now an inhibited writer, wants to see writing brought down as close as possible to the level at which he himself would write, were he ever able to overcome his inhibitions. Moreover, bored with his own life whose significance he fails to grasp, he seeks an escape in literature, where he must experience the significance of his own life vicariously, by observing just as insignificant incidents in lives which he believes to be less boring and more significant than his own. He is pleased to observe that the great or successful writer ate more or less the same breakfast as he, and was able to write something about it, the reader's breakfast, in retrospect, thus becomes a vital experience too, one worthy of a literary apotheosis. The intimate subject matter and tone of the autobiographical "Confessions," a literary genre established by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantics, have now invaded the whole of literature and can be detected even in some scientific or pseudo-scientific books.

Much of this is also due to our age's unscientific interest in science, to its interest in the facts or contents of science rather than in the methods according to which science organizes these facts. A social psychologist is interested in noting misconceptions and errors in the individual's impressions of a battle, but he has a methodology which permits him to classify these errors according to well-defined types, even to deduce facts from these errors. And Stendhal, a nineteenth-century novelist, describing the battle of Waterloo as one of his characters saw it, did this humorously and, to some extent, scientifically, in order to indicate how wrong and irrelevant one man's impressions can be. Stendhal did not present his one man's Waterloo with the deadpan earnestness of some of our journalists who offer us a one man's Bataan as it were everybody's Bataan, *the Bataan*.

All this has, it seems, led us far from poetry, but has still kept us well within the scope of general poetics, of the contemporary approach to diction, plot and character, whether in poetry or in journalism. In all our literature, subject matter has indeed been individualized. Crowds and communities have become so vast, with the growth of cities as populous as whole nations and nations vaster or more complex than any empires of the past, that most writers can no longer cope with a public view of a fact or an event, as they once did when the city-state, the court or the village was the social unit. Instead, our writers now assume that any one individual's attitudes are representative of those of the crowd. Yet the crowd is made of thousands of such individuals whose particular attitudes conflict with each other and with the general attitude of the crowd. In a race riot, for instance, the attitude of the crowd does not really illustrate the attitude of any one individual composing it, and an analysis of the attitudes of

one race-rioter, after the riot and once he has become detached from the mob, will not help us much to understand the mob's reactions. In the past, the writer would have generalized: he would have created one character who spoke the language and thoughts of the crowd, even if no such character ever existed in fact. But the writer knew his limitations: he could not make the crowd speak, nor could he introduce all the real characters who once composed it. And so he created a hypothetical character or a chorus, and this served his purpose, as the cobbler in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Nowadays, the writer will often detach a real individual from the crowd and use him as its representative, though this real character truly represents only himself and not the crowd. And this leads to an ambiguity now inherent in almost all our literature: our particular characters are too individually realistic to represent the general man whose ambassador they pretend to be in the realms of art, and our art has become one of particular characters and situations whose significance, far from being general, remains ambiguous and problematic. Our art is becoming socially atomistic.

Unscientific notions of science, of social anthropology, sociology, psychology or psychoanalysis, have led the artist, through regionalism, the social novel and the psychological novel, to the presentation of types which are intended to be generally relevant but whose significance remains very limited. Without any truly scientific method for analyzing and classifying his types, the artist generally stresses his characters erroneously, confusing their general substance with their individual accidents. And this leads to an art whose characters are, to a great extent, either lifeless ciphers or freaks, as in the average detective novel or even in such books as *Of Mice and Men* or Malraux's *Man's Fate* (where

Clappique, for instance, is a freak who actually proves nothing about man) or in Meyer Levin's *Citizens* where most of the characters are ciphers constructed to illustrate *a priori* social attitudes

In poetry, diction and language in general are as important as character and subject matter in journalism or the novel. And thus we observe, in the private languages of most modern poets, the same general trends as I have briefly sketched in the private subject matters and the individualistic character of modern journalism and fiction. The modern poet tends to speak as if only to himself, he no longer cares to consider very earnestly the problems of communication, of a public language. In the poetry of Auden we have seen the private joke, the cryptic slang of dreams or of a clique, take the place of more traditional or current poetic diction. The use of such private language is, in a way, illuminating: a different word lights up the thing differently and reveals in it properties or peculiarities which are apparent to the corners of the new word and have determined or justified this new language. But the problem of the thing's being is not solved, on the contrary, this problem is made only more acute, now that additional peculiarities of the thing have been discovered or stressed. Indeed, the flight into private language, among our poets, is very much an admission of defeat, it bears strong analogies with another flight, that into new myths, which has, in recent years, been such a striking symptom of the inability of many of our poets to cope rationally with our age's problems of belief. Apocalyptic allegories, stressing this or that aspect of the fascist Behemoth or what-have-you, do not explain much, especially as all such allegories, in an age which has no unified system of beliefs and symbols, must inevitably use symbols which are familiar or relevant only to one individual

or to a minority. And thus these symbols, lacking the catholicity or general currency of Dante's or Milton's, actually tell us more about the individual who created them or uses them than about the thing which they intend to symbolize. Indeed, here too lies buried a misconception: the poet is competing with philosophy, religion or science, trying to make poetry explain phenomena which it no longer has the equipment to explain satisfactorily. Instead of explaining, the poet should content himself with describing the object and his own emotional reaction to it. The poet is, first and foremost, a poet, not a prophet, philosopher, social scientist or historian, and his attempts to emulate religion, philosophy or science must generally lead him, at best, to the writing of such dull oddities as, say, the botanical poetry of Erasmus Darwin, the dictionary of ichthyology which the Latin poet Oppian once compiled in verse, the astronomical purple passages of Benlowes or the stuffier apocalyptic books of William Blake, rather than to the composition of a new *De rerum natura* or a new *Divine Comedy*.

But the modern poet, too often, is not content with being a mere poet. He is envious of the greater prestige enjoyed by politicians, scientists and historians in our age. He feels that he must expand or complicate his art. He feels too that he must disguise his meagre knowledge and present it as if it were secret or hidden, acquired by partaking of some forbidden fruit. Hence the confusion and the obscurity which, in modern poetry, are now so frequent. Hence too our age's tendency to produce so often the raw materials of a great literature instead of its finished monuments.

Edouard Roditi



## ANDRÉ GIDE AND THE POET IN WARTIME

THE problem of the poet in wartime has its parallel, and illustration, in André Gide's felt need for accepting communism. He needed a *raison d'être*—he needed, as Massis puts it, "a cause transcending his own ego"; he had gone as far as he could go "in the direction of liberty." For the artist, though, the problem is not thus simply resolved. "The value I cherish more than anything," Gide said, "is my art." The artist as a man needs a faith, the artist as artist cannot function merely as a *commentator* on, or justifier of, any belief. After his acceptance of communism Gide's genius lay fallow. "Asked by François Mauriac what prevented him from producing art, he answered 'What prevents me from writing is my fear of the index. Don't misunderstand me! I don't mean the exterior index. What disturbs me is my own anxiety to keep in line. The fear of transgressing the norm can become quite upsetting, once you have recognized that the norm is good. I have always been strictly opposed to all kinds of orthodoxy. Even now the Marxian orthodoxy seems as dangerous to me as any other—dangerous for the work of art at least. But as I am convinced that the Marxist orthodoxy is useful or even indispensable to guarantee the establishment of a new social order, I think it worthwhile to sacrifice art, for the time being at least. The Party Line is necessary, perhaps. But, of course, an artist cannot work according to any line.'"<sup>1</sup>

One does not have to accept Gide's faith in the communist order to appreciate his problem as an artist. The artist as artist and the artist as man owes allegiance, loyalty to each of his selves—the choice is not as between God and Mammon. Both have

<sup>1</sup>Klaus Mann, *André Gide*, Creative Age Press, 1943, pp. 255-6

to be served. The perilous balance is achieved only through the exercise of exquisite care. Those, like Gide, who attempt the balance will exhibit a "tendency toward the dialectic reconciliation of seemingly incompatible contrasts." Those who fail of the balance will in a time of stress write, like Miss Millay, with a mild hysteria, offering battle cries in lieu of insights. Others will, as Gide suggests, "sacrifice art, for the time being at least." Yet if the creative drive is strong enough the artist will hardly undergo a long period of inaction.

The artist as man may recognize that the norm is good—as artist he can hardly be so complacent. Eventually he will subject the norm to his criticism. Klaus Mann has aptly interjected a verse from Eliot into his interpretation of Gide as communist:

Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow

The inevitable book, *Back From the Soviet Union*, is at once panegyric and mordant criticism. The artist could not sacrifice his integrity for long. The artist's mind is *ferment*, is *becoming*—is *creation*.

"The work of art is a magic mirror: it can solve problems, simply by reflecting them." Perhaps in *solve* Mann has chosen the wrong word. " . . . the confusions and contradictions of the human drama in general, and of André Gide's drama in particular, are disentangled, purified, transfigured, by the heavenly touch of art. The artistic solution, however, is relevant only to the artistic sphere. Its validity becomes dubious when tested in the cold light of sober discussion. The same problems which, transformed into images, had ceased to be perturbing, becoming

heavy and painful again" The danger the artist faces is in attempting to present an artistic *solution* to a practical problem,—as though, say, a sculptor's representation of Andrew Jackson on a horse explained, except through fairly remote indirection, his qualities as a leader Perhaps the statue serves as a preparation for understanding the man as a leader it is no complete answer in itself The important writer exercises a spiritual influence upon his reader, he helps to transmute the quality of the reader's mind, to deepen its resonance, to increase its resilience He does not present the reader with a simple catechism of easily-learned questions and answers It is through the artist's freedom to present his images and characters and insights freely, to establish the ethical and political and philosophical contexts of his poem or narrative that the reader is able, in judging the work of art, to move away from the norm he knows and accepts as a base in order to return to it more completely aware of the values and limitations of that norm The wartime poet faces the same "index" that temporarily frustrated Gide The war poems of Gide which, F C Weiskopf writes, are exerting an important force in the underground in France, should prove, when available, valuable documents for the critic and invaluable guides to the poet

*William Van O'Connor*

## REVIEWS

### PATCHEN'S PROGRESS

*Cloth of the Tempest*, by Kenneth Patchen Harper & Bros

MR PATCHEN'S appeals to the interest of his readers are various, and often strange His poetic methods are spe-

cial, even in a day when poetic methods are more likely to be special than ordinary. The most obvious case in documentation of this point is the so-called "poem-in-drawing-and-type," where the poet has sought to evoke effects from the physical design of the lettering and from odd and naive cartoons with which the verbal statements are sometimes mingled. Or—perhaps almost equally obvious, but quotable here—we might notice the following, the first section of a poem entitled *Depafelnu smowkutbeynakuldeo*

Father  
The ice moves down  
Over the earth  
And golden  
Heads  
Bow in heaven  
As the  
S  
hag  
gy  
Thing awakes  
to howl at the cold moon

I am by no means trying to make Mr. Patchen look foolish and eccentric. On the contrary, it seems probable that his "experimental" poetry always has a basically serious intention. And there are some instances in which this seriousness is very clear.

In a region near the pleasant wall  
Two companies of soldiers are getting red  
You know how that goes. But new flutes  
For better tunes, eh? Scrub the kitchen, lads,  
The house is on fire. (O we'll all sing one day!)

Here is one of Mr. Patchen's recurrent and favored themes: the overwhelming destructiveness of the actual world, and belief that the new and desirable world is coming. If this strikes one as somewhat elementary thinking, the impression is not much

altered when we encounter the theme in its poetic context. Mr Patchen's attitudes toward the theme are intense, moreover they are, morally, of the best—and that is no small value inside poetry as well as outside it. But the reference of the theme is to a profound and complicated matter, of which Mr Patchen's understanding is surely not adequate.

Mr Patchen has and habitually uses the naive vision of life (for example, *How to Be an Army*). But to have the naive vision and nothing else is to be a child. The poets who have spoken naively (William Blake or John Crowe Ransom) would without doubt feel quite wounded if we were misled to suppose they really were so. Their naivete is only a gesture of unpretentiousness, or, it may be, as in Mr Ransom's case, of gentle irony. It must be granted that Mr Patchen knows this, the signs of his departures from the childlike approach are manifold, and include the elaborate and evasive technique of the drawing-and-type poem already cited along with other practices that I do not have space to discuss. And these devices are to an extent successful, for they generate interesting and even brilliant effects, to which the naivete then becomes contributory. Finally, however, I feel that the poems in this collection do not "satisfy", and I trace this dissatisfaction to the poet's lack of a body of sharp and empirically genuine ideas—of perhaps a political and psychological nature. Acquiring such a set of ideas, Mr Patchen would probably steer away from his tendency toward vague but furious myth-making which leads him to drop in a word or two about God or a mention of Ratheda and Tedu every now and then, and he might in the end develop a much more mature and important kind of poetry.

*E S Forgotson*

## ON CANADIAN POETRY

*The Book of Canadian Poetry A Critical and Historical Anthology*, edited with an Introduction and Notes, by A J M Smith  
University of Chicago Press

*A Little Anthology of Canadian Poets*, edited by Ralph Gustafson  
The Poets of the Year, New Directions

*On Canadian Poetry*, by E K Brown The Ryerson Press, Toronto

A J M Smith, able Canadian poet, turned anthologist of Canadian poetry on a Guggenheim fellowship, finds the Dominion's verse affected with a century-and-a-half-old case of schizophrenia. One recurring personality "has attempted to describe and interpret whatever is essentially and distinctively Canadian and thus come to terms with an environment that is only now ceasing to be colonial." The second personality, equally persistent, "has made a heroic effort to transcend colonialism by entering into the universal, civilizing culture of ideas." In his selections from contemporary Canadian poets, Smith has found the two groups sufficiently distinct to be presented separately. Part V of the anthology is "Modern Poetry The Native Tradition" and Part VI is "Modern Poetry The Cosmopolitan Tradition." And although here as in earlier work the outlines of the groups are at times blurred (why is Dorothy Livesay, whose elegy on Lorca is included here, more "native" than "cosmopolitan"?) the observation is in general an accurate one, and one helpful in appreciating "the broad development of English-Canadian poetry from its beginnings at the end of the eighteenth century to its renewal of power in the revolutionary work of today" which the editor has undertaken to present in his 450-page anthology.

A scant dozen selections (Part I of the anthology) are pre-

sented from translations of early Indian poetry and French-Canadian folk songs, but no attempt has been made to include French-Canadian poetry. Smith begins his anthology proper (Part II, "Pioneer and Emigrant: The Rise of a Native Tradition") with Oliver Goldsmith, who was born in Nova Scotia in 1781 and was the grandnephew and namesake of the English poet. Goldsmith published in 1825 *The Rising Village*, in which he attempted to contrast life in the new land with the decay of his granduncle's deserted village. The editor finds his work notable as that of the first Canadian to discover "any compelling subject of poetry in the challenge of the new land to the sanguine and hardy settlers from Europe." For the next quarter of a century there was little written or published. A missionary in the Northwest Territories, G. J. Mountain, published *Songs of the Wilderness* in 1846. An impoverished Protestant clergyman, Standish O'Grady, published the first canto (a thousand heroic couplets) of a projected work, *The Emigrant, A Poem, In Four Cantos*. Susanna Moodie, mistress of four hundred acres of unbroken wilderness in Upper Canada, left a record of her experiences in prose and verse in *Roughing It in the Bush*. Joseph Howe, an influential Nova Scotia editor who fought for freedom of the press and responsible government, left a body of "literary remains" of some interest which were published after his death.

It was not, however, until the work of Charles Heavysege (1816-76), Charles Sangster (1822-93), and Charles Mair (1838-1927), that "Canadian poetry began little by little to individualize itself." Sangster was the author of two volumes, *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* (1856) and *Hesperus* (1860) and the ten pages of his work included here show something of the "imagination brought under considerable technical skill" which

the editor claims for him Mair, published several volumes in which he 'sought to realize the poetic possibilities of purely Canadian themes" but seldom rose above the popular "poetic" diction of the day Most interesting of the three is Heavysege, who received less attention in Canada than his contemporaries because he made no effort to be a national poet, but whose major work, a long dramatic poem *Saul*, was praised in its day by Emerson and Longfellow, Hawthorne and Patmore With the selections from Heavysege, the anthology begins to be of interest for poetic as well as historical reasons Less interesting are a half-dozen other poets of the period which the editor has found worthy of inclusion C D Shanly, Alexander McLachlan, T D McGee, P V Yule, W W Smith, G T Lanigan, and J H Duvar

In the third section of the anthology (Part III, "The New Nationalism "The Golden Age'") the editor presents the group of vigorous poets of the nineties whose work has usually been considered by conventional critics (see the piece on Canadian poetry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) as the flowering of Canadian poetry Charles G D Roberts (1860—), Archibald Lampman (1861-99), Bliss Carman (1861-1929), and Duncan Campbell Scott (1862—) Lampman's first volume *Among the Millet* was published in 1888 and his only other collection to appear during his lifetime *Lyrics of Earth* in 1893 In 1893 also there appeared the first book by D C Scott *The Magic House* and the first book by Carman *Low Tide on Grand Pré* With Roberts, whose first volume of poems had been published earlier, the "four friends, all born between 1860 and 1862, inaugurated a movement that produced in Canada a body of descriptive nature poetry which was at its best sincere and original, the expression of genuine feeling and accurate observation"



Standing somewhat apart from the work of this group is that of George Frederick Cameron, whose *Lyrics on Freedom, Love, and Death* was published two years after his death at the age of 31 in 1885. Poems like Cameron's *My Political Faith* included here have little in common with the nature poems of his contemporaries. Also memorable is an earlier poet, Isabella Valancy Crawford, a young woman who died almost unknown in Canadian literary circles before Lampman and Carman had published their first work. It was not until nearly twenty years after her death that her qualities as a poet began to be recognized, but her most notable poems, as Smith points out, have "a boldness of imagery unapproached in Canadian poetry until we come to the contemporary work of E J Pratt." Others of the period are Frederick George Scott, who published his first book in 1888, W W Campbell, John E Logan, W H Drummond, S F Harrison, Helena Coleman, and Pauline Johnson.

A dozen or so poets who came to maturity in the generation between the time of Roberts and the younger poets writing today are grouped together by the editor (Part IV, "Varieties of Romantic Sensibility"). The ablest of the generation, which produced such divergent poets as Francis Sherman and Robert Service, John McCrae and Tom MacInnes, was perhaps Marjorie Pickthall, whose *Quiet* and *Resurgam* included here are lyrics of considerable power. Other poets of the period are Annie Charlotte Dalton, J E H MacDonald, G H Clarke, Arthur Stringer, T G Roberts, Katherine Hale, L M Bowman and Audrey Alexandra Brown.

The most rewarding sections of the anthology are in the hundred and fifty pages from Canadian poets of the world between the wars. Here is a whole body of very able contemporary poetry

in English which has for the most part remained unknown in the United States. As the editors of *POETRY* pointed out in presenting the Canadian Number of the magazine "New poets are 'discovered' almost simultaneously here and in England, their careers are fostered by magazines and book publishers in both countries, but there is as yet no comparable interchange between the United States and Canada." The poetry of Dorothy Livesay, A. M. Klein, Raymond Knister, Ronald Hambleton, Anne Marriott—and of A. J. M. Smith himself, who is too briefly represented here—needs only to be read for its worth to be recognized.

The most distinguished of all contemporary Canadian poets is E. J. Pratt, who published his first work two decades ago and is now the author of a dozen volumes of poetry. And certainly the work of the other modern poets included here—Margaret Avison, P. K. Page, Patrick Anderson, James Wreford, Ralph Gustafson, Carol Coates, Leo Kennedy, A. G. Bailey, Neil Tracy, L. A. Mackay, Marcus Adeney, Robert Finch, F. R. Scott, F. E. Lught, F. C. McLaren, M. E. Colman, Charles Bruce, Earle Birney, Leo Cox, W. W. E. Ross, A. S. Bourinot, Lloyd Roberts, Elise Aylen, and Kenneth Leslie—contains much that we will do well no longer to ignore.

If this review has dwelt rather too long on the historical development of Canadian poetry and the cataloguing of names, it is because it has seemed desirable to indicate something of the variety and scope of the anthology, and of Canadian poetry itself which continues to receive so little attention in the United States. It is inconceivable that a poet of anything like the accomplishment of E. J. Pratt, if he were writing in New England, would remain unknown throughout the United States. Surely

the fact that he lives north of the forty-ninth parallel is no good reason that he should remain unknown

*The Book of Canadian Poetry* is an anthology for which there has been a long and pressing need. It is fortunate that it has been undertaken by one who is peculiarly fitted by temperament and ability to compile it. Smith, winner of POETRY's Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize in 1941, is a capable poet in his own right, and one of broad and sympathetic understanding of the poetry of his compatriots. There could hardly be a better introduction to Canadian poetry than this.

*On Canadian Poetry*, by E. K. Brown, Professor of English at Cornell University, is a brief (157-page) critical study, part of which appeared under the title *The Development of Poetry in Canada, 1880-1940* in the Canadian Number of POETRY in April 1941, of which he was guest editor. Brown devotes little attention to the earlier Canadian poets and, indeed, little to the most recent. More than half of the volume is concerned with individual studies of "The Masters": Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott and E. J. Pratt. While as an introduction to Canadian poetry it cannot take the place of a reading of the poetry itself, it is a valuable study, and it is one which makes excellent reading in conjunction with Smith's anthology.

Ralph Gustafson's *A Little Anthology of Canadian Poets* is a very brief sampler of contemporary Canadian poetry. The thirty-two page New Directions pamphlet contains twenty-four poems by fifteen authors, and is something of a supplement to Gustafson's 1942 *Anthology of Canadian Poetry* which was published in the Penguin Books. Five of the poems in the *Little Anthology* and all of the poets—with the exception of the two youngest, Kay Smith and Raymond Souster—appear in *The Book of Cana-*

*dian Poetry* It is to be hoped that the distribution of the *Little Anthology* in the Poets of the Year series may stimulate its readers to look into the larger anthology

*Coleman Rosenberger*

PRESSED FLOWER

*Flower of Evil*, by Edwin Morgan Sheed and Ward

The curious and terrible comedy of Charles Baudelaire's life—"comedy" in the light of salvation achieved—is retold with a certain amount of factual conviction in Mr Morgan's brief chronicle. This is not a profound book, or even a particularly understanding book, but it is valuable for the wealth of vital detail, the detail almost of good gossip, which is compressed into it. The poet emerges as man, if not as poet. And this is precisely the biographer's intention: for in spite of the copious quotations from the poems themselves, Mr Morgan's analyses seldom rise much above précis and paraphrase, and in spite of a great deal of literary talk and small talk, one is left with a sense of persons, not ideas. The horrible Sainte-Beuve, yes, and step-father-bogey Aupick, and poor Ancelle with his mayor's chain and his incredible patience, and, floating above it all, the ridiculous ghost of Edgar Poe—but what of the meaning behind these obsessions and enthusiasms, these agonies of disease and betrayal, of Satanism and despair? Mr Morgan's answer is not satisfying: it is the Church.

He was suffering from a spiritual malaise, an emotional emptiness, a doubt of the complex society he was in, because he was seeking the Absolute which, like his contemporaries, he had abandoned, but was always seeking—in everything except the Church.

Or, at the end,

The smile, the stare into the clouds which answered Asselineau's frequent question as to whether he could be of use to him, indicated that he was putting all his hope in God, that the world he had wanted was shattered, that he was delivered of a thing he never did believe in, and that the fragments of his Faith had come together, late but, he hoped, not too late for God

This kind of omniscience is as irritating as it is facile I suppose that it is Mr Morgan's privilege to interpret "the smile, the stare into the clouds" as he wishes, another observer might less piously be reminded of Baudelaire's own cry,

*nos péchés sont têtus nos repentirs sont lâches,*

but the evidence was to seek elsewhere, before the deathbed, in the body of the poems, and it is this task that Mr Morgan has left undone

The evidence is certainly there It would be interesting and, I think, rewarding to undertake a comparative investigation of the religious poetry of Baudelaire and the "religious" "poetry" composed by Verlaine after his post-Rimbaud conversion The one, tortured, black, frequently blasphemous, the other, as in the sickly, faked simplicity of his poems to the Virgin Mary, all surface, all attitude *Nos repentirs sont lâches!* Such an investigation even if it revealed nothing more than the difference between religion and religiosity, would have afforded a stronger basis than any that Mr Morgan has been able to erect for his belief in Baudelaire's return to God As it stands, his book fails to illuminate just at the point where illumination is most needed

*Dudley Fitts*

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF PEACE

*Map of My Country*, by John Holmes Duell, Sloan and Pearce

John Holmes, discussing the metaphor which provides *Map of My Country* its formal unity, remarks that an actual map of a man's experience might be done "in several layers of thin colored papers, the ancestral and historical strata underneath, the present days on top." In this book the single poems, by a juxtaposition as of "colored papers," compose a "known world." Ten years ago John Holmes observed to me that he felt none of us could establish ourselves in our profession until we had shown we could compose a long poem. After his two collections, *Address to the Living* and *Fair Warning*, this is his initial essay at a larger work.

In his preface he indicates, with rare artistic humility, a consciousness of defect, a power in individual sections not yet perfectly adjusted to the stress within the whole structure. And I do not think that here is "the long poem." John Holmes will write, but he has prepared himself in his twentieth-century *Prelude*. His words about his friends, his students, about the deaf man carving ship models—and this poem, *Talk*, is one of the outstanding single pieces—acquire their full meaning only in relation to the concluding *Evening Meal in the Twentieth Century* and *Biography*. Because the poems relate to each other in climactic order, *Map of My Country* can be fairly judged only as an integrated long poem.

The studies of the great-uncle, of John Cousens, Robert Newdick, Albert Kahn, Charles Gott, Fish Ellis, Margaret Osgood, of three friends on Oldtown Hill and Plum Island beach, of a small boy—"The griefs of a little boy are forever" and "He knows

a humming world—forever”—are, taken separately, pathetic or pleasurable in recognition, never sternly tragic, are even, very occasionally, sentimental. But the intent of these rapid portraits, their sympathy and affection, becomes more than pathos or pleasure or simple sentiment when considered in juxtaposition with the powerful monologue, *King Richard the Seventh*, the imagined Richard of our time, “not at all a king, but nevertheless a deposed monarch.” With this and other final poems Holmes’ power of poetic understatement realizes itself, a private, fairly fortunate, not over-complex life read against the tragedy of history.

Richard the Seventh, who represents, Holmes says, “The man I believe in for our times,” is articulate history

I saw both faces of the dark god who loves us all,  
And knew thereafter our kind are kinder than we know  
And crueler than we fear

And Richard is also the will to live which survives history

I do not believe the world is dying, nor do you  
and

The god of Saturday mornings, poems and murders  
Is the same god, and the one who makes us well,  
I accept this god in my life    And so do you

*Overheard* in three ordered stanzas accomplishes in miniature what the Richard speech accomplishes for the whole book, the superposition of pathos, humor, wryness and sentiment against larger private and public purpose. The good and evil of experience appear not to the classic tragic eye nor to the romantic who wears his nerves outside, but to an average man of our time and all time who lives in a “house of peace” and is fond of his wife

It should not have taken me so long to learn  
But how can I speak aloud at my own table tonight,  
And not curse my own food, not cry out death,  
And not frighten my young son?

In this biographical map of experience John Holmes has made articulate, in a various and thoroughly poetic speech, the dilemma as well as the surviving power of the average man, trustful of the strength of love and always belatedly aware of the terrors against which love is protagonist in history. Anyone glancing *passim* may stop at a college reminiscence or a family vignette and conclude that *Map of My Country* is a quiet-colored geography of peace, but those who read the book as a long poem, in sequence as presented, will understand its climactic intention.

Jeremy Ingalls

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Dear Sir

In your issue of November, 1943, Mr. Thomas Howells reviews my book of criticism, *The Anatomy of Nonsense*. Nearly everything that Mr. Howells says, I believe, might be made the subject of objection, but certain things which he says must be made the subject of correction.

Mr. Howells states that the version of *Sunday Morning* appearing in the 1923 edition of *Harmonium* is identical with the 1915 version, which appeared in *POETRY*. This statement is untrue: the 1923 and 1931 versions are identical. In spite of the fact that Mr. Howells has apparently not seen the 1923 edition, he feels competent to accuse me of a factual error.

Mr. Howells states that there is no trace of Stevens' hedonism in the 1915 version. The hedonism seems to me quite obviously present in the passage beginning "Death is the mother of beauty." It is implicit in the stanzas following. There is no way of proving this: it is there for those who can read. In 1917 Glenway Wescott and I were freshmen at the University of Chicago. Wescott was 16 and I was 17. I forget which elucidated the poem to the other; I seem to remember that Wescott elucidated it to me. But we were agreed at that date that the poem was essentially a statement of Paterian hedonism, and at the age of 43 I see no reason to change that opinion.

Mr. Howells suggests that my errors of fact in this connection invalidate my conclusions about Stevens, but he does not say how. My thesis, briefly, was that Stevens wrote great poetry early in his career, but that his style has degenerated under the influence of his hedonistic philosophy.



It seems to me obvious that if Mr Howells were right, my general argument would be stronger than ever. Precisely what does Mr Howells have on his mind? Does he know?

Mr Howells objects to my theory that the word is primarily conceptual, that our experience with the concept generates our feelings for the word. He says "Words are symbols of concepts, but they are also symbols of emotions." I do not know what he means unless he means that such a word as "love" or "hate" is not conceptual. If this is what he means, he is mistaken, and should reread the group of *Preliminary Problems* with which my book opens. If he means something else, he should make himself clear, but I do not believe that he can do so.

Mr Howells objects to one of my objections to Eliot, namely, that Eliot states explicitly that one's ideals, or moral and literary principles, cannot influence one's feelings, and, presumably, one's literary and personal activities. Eliot seems to see an absolute divorce between principle and action. Mr Howells writes "As I understand Eliot, one may at a time of ripe judgment choose his ideals, his moral and critical system, he may not choose his feelings. These come to him, Eliot says, 'from the damage of a lifetime, and of having been born into an unsettled society'."

I think Winters is illogical in treating a possibly mistaken dualism as inconsistency or nonsense. Mr Howells seems to have read me with a certain haste. I made this objection in a section of the essay which has the heading, *Determinism*, a section in which I was trying to show that Eliot, in spite of his many protestations to the contrary, is a determinist when it comes to actual literary practice. I was interested in the apparent contradiction, but only secondarily. Eliot is in disagreement, on this point, not only with Aristotle, Aquinas, and every modern psychologist and psychiatrist of any respectability, but with the very church of which he professes to be a member. As a theoretic contemner of determinism, he is furthermore in disagreement with himself.

Mr Howells writes in connection with certain of my remarks on Adams "Winters would choose a dogma as a basis for organizing his intellectual and critical principles, not for the inherent truth of the dogma but for the beneficial effects of the organization. He argues that if demonstrably good consequences follow a belief, the belief must be true. Henry Adams was concerned not so much with what might be good for him as with what was true about him and the world." This is merely illiterate foolishness. My position was simply this: that in any theory of the universe (including human nature) human nature provides an important part of the data to be examined, if we discover that under the influence of a doctrine of determinism men tend toward automatism and that under the influence of a doctrine of more or less free will they display powers of self-direction, then the theory of determinism is false, for it is discernible that men can direct themselves, further, the doctrine of determinism is evil, for, besides being false, it paralyzes the human

organism in so far as it is really taken seriously. Adams merely started out with a couple of attitudes—principles would be too dignified a word for them—and at any cost deformed all his experience to make it available as illustration of his attitudes.

Mr Howells displays, for one so uncertain of his facts, his readings, and his thoughts, a self-assurance that is mildly perturbing, the more so as his case is not unique but typical of contemporary book reviewing and criticism. His method of careless examination, amateur thinking, pretentious pedantry, and aimless innuendo, is the method which is rapidly bringing the whole profession of literary criticism into contempt.

Sincerely,

Yvor Winters

#### REPLY TO MR WINTERS

Dear Sir

When I reviewed Mr Winters' book, I did not have access to the 1923 version of Stevens' *Harmonium*. I knew that the poem *Sunday Morning* in 1915 was a different poem from the one that Winters discusses in *The Anatomy of Nonsense*. Since the 1915 version continued to appear in every anthology I could find up to 1931—and it appears in several more recent ones—I concluded that "the hedonistic philosophy that Winters detects in the poem and from which he traces ultimate degeneracy in Stevens' later work was largely put there, so far as I can tell, by the changes Stevens made in the poem not long prior to 1931 and considerably later than 1915."

Well, 1923 is considerably later than 1915 in the development of a writer. I regret that I was unable to examine the 1923 publication of the poem. But I did know that it had two versions, and that the later version was not only the more "hedonistic" but, in my opinion, the better poem. My point was that a poem which becomes better artistically at the same time that it becomes more explicitly hedonistic cannot be used, as Winters uses it, to illustrate the debasing effects of hedonism on the author's work. That is still, I think, a valid point, even though with regard to the evolution of this poem, Mr Winters' ignorance and my own seem to complement one another.

Winters asks me whether, by saying that words may be symbols of emotion as well as of concepts, I meant that a word like "love" or "hate" is not conceptual. I did not. I meant that in expressing the emotions of love and hate a writer may employ words that function differently from these conceptual terms.

I have nothing to add on the problems of Eliot and Adams. I do not think I misunderstood Winters in his book. Certainly, he says nothing

ing in his letter to facilitate comprehension of these or any other issues

The defects of mind and character which Mr Winters attributes to me are shared, in his opinion, by such a large and varied group of people that I do not see how I can really take any personal offense

Sincerely,

THOMAS HOWELLS

## NEWS NOTES

There are few events of simultaneous radio and literary importance, so that it gives us especial pleasure to be able to announce this one. Beginning on Saturday, February 5, a series of radio programs written and narrated by Archibald MacLeish will be broadcast over the NBC network on the NBC Inter-American University of the Air. The series, called *The American Story*, will deal with the life and literature of the Western hemisphere for four and a half centuries, and Mr MacLeish's scripts will use a variety of techniques in the presentation—narrative, dramatic, and readings from the literature. On the first program, on February 5, at 6 00 to 6 30 p.m., Central War Time, Mr MacLeish will present his conception of "the American story." Stations WMAQ, Chicago, and WEAJ, New York, will carry the program, along with other network stations.

This is the first time in radio history that a leading American writer has been commissioned to write an extensive cycle such as this for the radio, says NBC. One is tempted to comment, "At last!" There has been much talk of the potentialities of radio as an art form and an educational force, but little has come of it, and therefore the announcement of this program is particularly welcome. Probably no writer today is better equipped to interpret, through the medium of radio, the development of the culture of the Americas than the distinguished poet and librarian of Congress. *The American Story* may well be a contribution to as well as an interpretation of American creativeness.

New Directions announces that the 1944 series of Poets of the Year will consist of only six books, owing to the difficulties of wartime production.

Princeton University is sending a gift of books to its students who are now serving in the armed forces, offering each the choice of three titles from a list of seventy. The seventy are not the University's candidates for the "great books," but rather a wide selection of various kinds of entertainment and good reading available in compact reprint editions. The list includes such books as Cummings' *The Enormous Room*, Lord Charnwood's *Lincoln, Walden*, John Woolman's *Journal*, *The Origin of Species*, and *The Thirty-nine Steps*—in short a variety. As for poetry, there's Conrad Aiken's Modern Library anthology of American verse,

two volumes of World's Classics' *English Verse* series, which take you from Dryden to Wordsworth and from Scott to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the *Pocket Book of Verse* (English and American), the complete works of Shakespeare in three volumes, and a volume of other Elizabethan dramatists

A series of poetry readings in New York held at the New York Public Library have been attended with great success, several of our eastern correspondents tell us. The audiences frequently numbered over three hundred. Marianne Moore, William Rose Benét, Oscar Williams, Horace Gregory, Reuel Denney, Kenneth Patchen, Padraic Colum, May Sarton, Marya Zaturenska, James Agee, Langston Hughes, W. H. Auden, and Muriel Rukeyser were the poets who took part.

The magazine *View* announces that it is entering the book-publishing field with four forthcoming volumes of poetry. They are *Young Cherry Trees Protected Against the Hares*, by André Breton (in English translation), *Anti Angel* by Lionel Abel, *First Poems* by Philip Lamantia, and a volume to be chosen from book manuscripts submitted before April 31, 1944. Only the work of poets who have had no previous volume of verse in English will be considered. Judges will be Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, editors of *View*, and John Peale Bishop. The poet whose manuscript is chosen will receive one hundred dollars in advance royalties. The series will be available at the advance subscription price of twelve dollars. The Breton volume will have a cover designed by Marcel Duchamp, the Lamantia volume a cover by Max Ernst, and the others by artists as yet unannounced. Inquiries and manuscripts may be addressed to View, Inc., 1 E 53rd St., New York 22.

#### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WILLIAM MEREDITH first appeared in *POETRY* in April, 1942. He graduated from Princeton in 1940, and worked on *The New York Times*. He helped Allen Tate edit an anthology, *Princeton Verse Between Two Wars*. In 1942 he was transferred from the Army to become a Navy flier. A lieutenant (jg), he has been flying with a Navy scouting squadron in Alaska and the Aleutians. His book, *From the Impossible Land*, will be published this spring in the Yale Series of Younger Poets.

JESSICA NELSON NORTH has been associated with *POETRY*, in an active or advisory capacity, since 1927, and her work has been familiar to our readers for an even longer time. She is the author of three books of poems, *A Prayer Rug*, *The Long Leash*, and the recently published *Dinner Party*, as well as two novels, *Arden Acres* and *Morning in the Land*.

DANIEL CATTON RICH is Director of Fine Arts at the Chicago Art Institute. This is his third appearance here.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING, of Wilton, Conn., has contributed frequently

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to POETRY and other magazines, and is the author of a book of poems, *Core of Fire*. He was one of the editors of *The Measure*.

MARY BARNARD is a native and resident of Vancouver, Wash. She was awarded our Levinson Prize in 1935. She has not yet published a volume.

ISRAEL NEWMAN is a psychiatrist on the staff of the State Hospital in Augusta, Me. He was born in Lithuania and emigrated to this country at the age of eighteen. His work has appeared in POETRY and various other periodicals.

DON GORDON was born in Bridgeport, Conn., and now lives in Los Angeles. He is head of the reading department at a major motion picture studio. His poetry has been published in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *The New Masses*, *The New Republic*, etc. His first book of poems, *Statement*, has just been published by Bruce Humphries.

ROY FULLER is a young English poet serving in the British Navy. He has appeared here before, and has been published in numerous English periodicals.

The following six poets appear here for the first time.

SAUL GOTTLIEB was born twenty years ago in New York City, "where I have lived mostly except for a brief runaway to Alaska in my sixteenth year, via the thumb and bum method, just before I was to graduate from high school." He has appeared in *Scholastic*, *The Youth Review*, *Tomorrow*, *Yank*, *PM*, and *Reveille*, a book of war poems by members of the armed forces. He is a private in the Signal Corps, and is stationed in England.

JOHN M. POOLE was born in Shanghai in the French Concession of the International Settlement, and brought to America at an early age. He was educated at the University of Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the Coast Guard and has been fairly consistently stationed on the Jersey Coast, afloat and ashore, and, while in the service, was recently married.

WILLIAM MICHAUX writes "I was born and grew up in Wilson, N. C., was associate editor of *The Carolina Magazine* of the University of North Carolina, was graduated there with an A.B. in 1939, have worked in the tobacco industry and in Civil Service, have had poems published in the poetry magazines, and expect early publication of a book of poetry, *Bread and Water*, by the Press of James A. Decker, am now 24, in the Army, studying personnel psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, and am married."

IRVING LAYTON was born in 1912 and is a resident of Montreal. He was graduated from McGill University there in 1939. At present he is a salesman in a haberdashery store, gives two courses in advanced English at the Jewish University, helps edit *First Statement*, and attends a seminar in philosophy at McGill. He has appeared in various Canadian magazines.

RAY SMITH was born in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1915. He attended Hamline University, where he won the Bridgman Poetry Award in three

successive years. He has been printed in *The New Masses* and other magazines. He is now a first lieutenant in the Medical Administrative Corps serving overseas.

IAN A GORDON was born in 1908 in Edinburgh. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh, and is now head of the English department at Victoria University College, Wellington, New Zealand. He has published verse in English and New Zealand journals. He has written a book, *John Skelton, Poet Laureate*, and is editor of *New Zealand New Writing*.

Of our prose contributors, Mr. O'Connor appears for the first time.

EDOUARD RODITI, of New York City, is at present with the Office of War Information. He is a frequent contributor to POETRY, and is the author of a volume of poems, *Prison Within Prison*. E. S. FORGOTSON, now living in Brooklyn, has contributed verse and criticism to *The Southern Review*, *The Nation*, POETRY, etc. He attended Vanderbilt and Louisiana State. COLEMAN ROSENBERGER, of Washington, D. C., contributes frequently to POETRY. His book of verse, *The Virginia Poems*, was recently published by the Gotham Book Mart, and he is represented in the anthology, *War Poems of the United Nations*. JEREMY INGALLS is at present living in Chicago and writing, on a Guggenheim Fellowship, a long narrative poem, *The Thunder Saga of Tabl*. She is the author of a book of poems entitled *The Metaphysical Sword*. DUDLEY FITTS, the well-known poet, critic and translator, is teaching at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass. He is the author of numerous volumes, among which are *Poems*, published in 1937, and his translations, *Poems From the Palatine Anthology* and *More Poems From the Palatine Anthology*. He recently edited an *Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry*. WILLIAM VAN O'CONNOR was born in Syracuse, N. Y., in 1915. He is the author of two books, the more recent of which is *Climates of Tragedy*, published by the Louisiana State University Press. He has taught at Ohio State, Louisiana State and St. Joseph College, Hartford. He is now in the Army Signal Corps.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ORIGINAL VERSE

*Poems*, by Dunstan Thompson. Simon and Schuster.  
*Day of Fire*, by Leonard Bacon. Oxford University Press.  
*Statement*, by Don Gordon. Bruce Humphries, Boston.  
*At the Long Sault, and Other Poems*, by Archibald Lampman. Ryerson Press, Toronto.  
*Journey Into Yesterday*, by Irene Chapman Benson. Ryerson Press.

*Louder Than the Drum*, by Gerard Previn Meyer   League to Support Poetry, N Y C

*Tahiti Holiday, and Others*, by Sydney Gorham Babson   Binfords and Mort, Portland, Ore

*So Little Done*, by Knox Munson   Bruce Humphries

*These Poets*, by Harry Hooton   Garry Lyle Pub Co, Cremorne, N S W , Australia

*My Dancing Slippers, and Other Verse*, by Claton S Rice   PRIV ptd, Seattle

ANTHOLOGIES, TRANSLATIONS AND PROSE

*Love Poems Old and New*, ed by Catharine Connell Random House  
*Conference Poetry* Fourth Annual Writers' Conference, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill

*Twelve Echoes from France*, trans by Arthur Barker   Progressive Pub Society, Wellington, Australia

*On Canadian Poetry*, by E K Brown   Ryerson Press, Toronto

# P O E T R Y

## *A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

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### FIVE POEMS

#### THE PURITAN

IN TENDER May when the sweet laugh of Christ  
Sounds in the fields, and bitter sorrows die,  
Death wanes and lovers kiss and everything  
Made perfect dances in the earth and sky,  
Then near the Maypole where the children sing  
A shadow falls, the hand and the hoarse cry  
Of one whom winter more than well sufficed

He is the Puritan under whose tall hat  
Evil is nested like an ugly toad,  
And in his eye he holds the knotted, goad,  
And in his weathered hand the knotted goad,  
Brimstone is on his tongue, for he will risk  
Hellfire to pleasure, sin is his abode,  
A barn and Bible his best habitat



He dwells in evil, beauty of the day,  
Or drifting snows of spring or flowers wet  
Or touch of woman's hand are not for him,  
The flesh of pleasure which he must forget  
Walks in his sleep, awakens him more grim,  
Deeper he falls into the Devil's debt,  
And harder must he rant and harder pray

Till every stone that manifests a pose  
Beckons him lewdly, binds him to the stake  
Where the cold fires of suspicion burn,  
And he would gladly die for his name's sake  
And call it righteous, tortures he would learn  
To teach that flesh must sting and bones must ache  
And hell claim all that happiness bestow

His is the heresy of gloom, to all  
That's grace a sin, to God a stumbling block,  
And to himself damnation    Year by year  
He sees the hypocrisy of nature mock  
His steadfastness, and in old age his fear  
Of beauty strikes him dead, becomes a rock  
Fixed like a gargoyle on a cathedral wall

THE INTERLUDE

1

Much of transfiguration that we hear,  
The ballet of the atoms, the second law  
Of thermodynamics, Isis, and the queer

Fertilization of fish, the 'Catholic's awe  
 For the life-cycle of the Nazarene,  
 His wife whom sleeping Milton thought he saw,

Much of the resurrection that we've seen  
 And taken part in, like the Passion Play,  
 All of autumnal red and April green,

To those who walk in work from day to day,  
 To economic and responsible man,  
 All, all is substance Life that lets him stay

Uses his substance kindly while she can  
 But drops him lifeless after his one span

## 2

What lives? the proper creatures in their homes?  
 A weed? the white and giddy butterfly?  
 Bacteria? necklaces of chromosomes?

What lives? the breathing bell of the clear sky?  
 The crazed bull of the sea? Andean crags?  
 Armies that plunge into themselves to die?

People? A sacred relic wrapped in rags,  
 The ham-bone of a saint, the winter rose,  
 Do these?—And is there not a hand that drags

The bottom of the universe for those  
 Who still perhaps are breathing? Listen well,  
 There lives a quiet like a cathedral close

At the soul's center where substance cannot dwell  
And life flowers like music from a bell.

3

Writing, I crushed an insect with my nail  
And thought nothing at all    A bit of wing  
Caught my eye then, a gossamer so frail

And exquisite, I saw in it a thing  
That scorned the grossness of the thing I wrote  
It hung upon my finger like a sting

A leg I noticed next, fine as a mote,  
"And on this frail eyelash he walked," I said,  
"And climbed and walked like any mountain goat"

And in this mood I sought the little head,  
But it was lost, then in my heart a fear  
Cried out, "A life—why beautiful, why dead!"

It was a mite that held itself most dear,  
So small I could have drowned it with a tear

BALLET MÉCANIQUE

The hand involves the wheel that weaves the hand  
Without the kiss of kind, the digits flick,  
The cranks obedient to no command  
Raise on their iron shoulders the dead weight

For which no forges cheer    Nothing is late,  
 Nothing behind, excited, or too quick  
 The arm involves the treadle and the wheel  
 Winds wakeless motion on a tireless reel

The kiss of kind remembers wood and wool  
 To no cold purpose, anciently, afar  
 The wheel forgets the hand that palpitates  
 The danceless power, and the power waits  
 Coiled in the tension tower for the pull  
 That freezes the burnt hand upon the bar

## SHYLOCK

*Ho, no, no, no, no, my meaning in saying he is a good  
 man, is to have you understand me, that he is sufficient*

Home from the court he locked the door and sat  
 In the evil darkness, suddenly composed  
 The knife shone dimly on the table and his eyes  
 Like candles in an empty room  
 Shone hard at nothing    Yet he appeared to smile

Then he took up his talith and his hat  
 And prayed mechanically and absently closed  
 His fingers on the knife    If he could realize  
 His actual defeat or personal doom  
 He must die or change or show that he was vile

Nevertheless he would remain and live,  
 Submit to baptism, pay his fines,

Appear in the Rialto as early as tomorrow,  
Not innocently but well aware  
That his revenge is an accomplished fact

And poverty itself would help to give  
Humility to his old designs  
His fallen reputation would help borrow  
A credit of new hate, for nothing will repair  
This open breach of nature, cruel and wracked

His daughter lies with swine, and the old rat  
Tubal will be obsequious  
To buy off his disgrace and bargain on his shame  
Despair can teach him nothing at all  
Gold he hates more than he hates Jesus' crown.

The logic of Balthasar will fall flat  
On heaven's hearing    Incurious  
As to the future, totally clear of blame,  
He takes his ledgers out of the wall  
And lights them with a taper and sits down

#### THE LEG

Among the 1000form, in twilight sleep,  
*What have I lost?* he first inquires,  
Peers in the middle distance where a pain,  
Ghost of a nurse, hastily moves, and day,  
Her blinding presence pressing in his eyes  
And now his ears    They are handling him  
With rubber hands    He wants to get up

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One day beside some flowers near his nose  
 He will be thinking, *When will I look at it?*  
 And pain, still in the middle distance, will reply,  
*At what?* and he will know it's gone,  
 O where! and begin to tremble and cry  
 He will begin to cry as a child cries  
 Whose puppy is mangled under a screaming wheel.

Later, as if deliberately, his fingers  
 Begin to explore the stump He learns a shape  
 That is comfortable and tucked in like a sock  
 This has a sense of humor, this can despise  
 The finest surgical limb, the dignity of limping,  
 The nonsense of wheel-chairs Now he smiles to the wall  
 The amputation becomes an acquisition

For the leg is wondering where he is (all is not lost)  
 And surely he has a duty to the leg,  
 He is its injury, the leg is his orphan,  
 He must cultivate the mind of the leg,  
 Pray for the part that is missing, pray for peace  
 In the image of man, pray, pray for its safety,  
 And after a little it will die quietly

The body, what is it, Father, but a sign  
 To love the force that grows us, to give back  
 What in Thy palm is senselessness and mud?  
 Knead, knead the substance of our understanding  
 Which must be beautiful in flesh to walk,  
 That if Thou take me angrily in hand  
 And hurl me to the shark, I shall not die

*Karl Shapiro*  
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I WAIT FOR HER LETTER IN THE TWILIGHT

Under a satin sky  
Pompadour, and how,  
A little car steers by  
And Echo tells its lie  
And what is this song arising  
In the sleeping wood at evening  
In the monotonous park  
Where the regiment is dreaming  
In the bivouac of the shade  
In the heart of the lovely fall

How the wounded hours  
War at Crouy-sur-Ourcq  
Go to their lingering death  
You are my core and pith  
You are my bird of prey  
O steaming camion  
O melancholy love  
Along the great highway  
Leave for the mist and cloud  
The agitated ground  
And do you see my love  
In the sadness in the dream?

And is this golden tint  
This treasure turned to rust  
The way she wore her hair?

LOUIS ARAGON

What does she tell me, wind?  
What does she tell me say  
Stay, as in other days,  
Stay, as it was before  
The battles in the East

Nothing, the mailman says

*Louis Aragon*

*translated by Rolfe Humphries*



GERMINAL

And now the Spring    The peevish breezes vex  
Bulbs that are thrust before the equinox  
Ambition and the cruel flux of love  
Burn black and deep, imprisoned in a mirror  
Whose one reflection is the season's terror,  
Nor can we sate ourselves, or cry enough

The sky is curdled, buds dissolve in glue,  
We bruise the meadows that we trample through  
Dead tubers blossom into feet and hands,  
While on earth's patient breast whose veins are danger  
Still cracked, still withered by the winds of hunger,  
The ulcer wreathes itself in flowers and fronds

O tomb-tormented, rising from his sleep,  
The buried stranger has begun to creep  
Blood flows on leaves and limbs    He snaps the sheath  
Which holds him captive from the curious light  
Brute frenzy and the bestial drum await  
His advent at this hour of birth and death

Rib of ourselves, whom once we fed upon,  
Now have you clothed your crumbled skeleton,  
Till every vein and sinew germinates  
O dying boy, whom our indifference slew,  
Your bones have sprouted where we buried you  
You come to punish and make desolate

The Winter gave you sour roots for food  
You would have loved us in your servitude  
Gentle, the weakly son, who knew no hope,  
You asked for sanctuary, you begged for bread,  
But now you will not see us comforted  
You come with turbulence, with barbarous rape

We should oppose the tyrant Yet the will  
Cannot control its secret oracle  
Which thrusts him yearly from the laboring soil  
Now dense with sweat, now dark with menaces  
He drags the seething burden of his thighs  
Across our passive flesh The huge seeds fall

*Francis King*

FOUR POEMS

MARCH

The sky wheels turn, the witless wind deserts  
The shocked and frosty south like an express  
Sirens like prophets in the deserts of  
The weather know the momentariness  
And rush of season  
When the shrewd legs of the father  
Are altered slightly in the bitter son,  
Who must walk faster, travel farther,  
To where straight lines grow slack and greener  
Under the poise and plunging in the Ram,  
Whose angry horns precede him at a run

SOME WINTER TOUCH HAS RIMED THE SUN

Some winter touch has rimed the sun  
To glitter so, from east to west  
Our time has crossed the Equinox  
And hurries on in red-cheeked haste

I see the great coat on the Bear,  
The Dog behowls the cornered moon,  
And heliophobic people turn  
Their backs upon a waning sun,

Draw up their chairs to gaseous fires  
And winter courage from the stock

Of prematurely aged drink,  
And day's for bed at five o'clock

Then sometimes, city, I can hear,  
Before the crystal light depart,  
The welling of your grimy tears  
And stricture of your shrunken heart.

HAVING EXCHANGED THESE VIEWS

Having exchanged these views  
Will never turn to vows  
Or writing that the draught  
Might scatter through the house,

Through bolted corridor  
And down the padded stair,  
The long uncommon words  
And incoherent Dear

Your view from window seat  
Sees what I never sought,  
Your coiffure means what I  
Have understood and hate

Though your accustomed pose  
Should change to what I praise,  
Along the coasts of light  
The shapes of day increase

To storm troops<sup>f</sup>of desire  
Beyond the zero hour,  
Whose uniform and flesh  
The wind stirs on the wire

WEEK-END PARTY

A few live dangerously on the little lake  
Where smaller fish do not remember salt  
One synchronizes watches in a room,  
Rereads the funnies and the names of perfumes  
Some use their pearls inside the private vault  
And keep desires in diaries under lock  
The frosted windowpane tempts one to draw  
A thing the others swear they never saw

Who then had the time to summon the police?  
For they, though told there must be some mistake,  
Find in the closet underneath the stair  
All necessary evidence, a button,  
A corpse, temptation's black lace underwear,  
And, from the five they've reason to suspect,  
Four more confessions than they wish to hear

*Dean P Jeffress*

## FIVE POEMS

### RESURRECTION

Christ in the darkness, dead,  
His own disaster hid  
His hope for man, too soon  
Sealed with the outer stone

This heaven was at hand,  
Men saw the promised land,  
Yet swiftly, with a nail,  
Made fast the earlier rule

All saviours ever to be  
Share this dark tragedy  
The vision beyond reach  
Becomes the grave of each

And that of him which rose  
Is our own power to choose  
Forever, from defeat,  
Kingdoms more splendid yet

Play Easter to this grave  
No Christ can ever leave,  
It is one man has fallen  
It is ourselves have risen

EXAMINER<sup>1</sup>

The routine trickery of the examination  
Baffles these hot and discouraged youths  
Driven by they know not what external pressure  
They pour their hated self-analysis  
Through the nib of confession, onto the accusatory page

I who have plotted their immediate downfall,  
I am entrusted with the divine categories,  
A B C D and the hell of E,  
The parade of prize and the backdoor of pass

In the tight silence  
Standing by a green grass window  
Watching the fertile earth graduate its sons  
With more compassion—not commanding the shape  
Of stem and stamen, bringing the trees to pass  
By shift of sunlight and increase of rain,  
For each seed the whole soil, for the inner life  
The environment receptive and contributory—  
I shudder at the narrow frames of our textbook schools  
In which we plant our so various seedlings  
Each brick-walled barracks  
Cut into numbered rooms, black-boarded,  
Ties the venturing shoot to the master stick,  
The screw-desk rows of lads and girls  
Subdued in the shade of an adult—  
Their acid subsoil—  
Shape the new to the old in the ashen garden

Shall we open the whole skylight of thought  
 To these tiptoe minds, bring them our traveled world  
 And the broad acres of art for their field of growth?

Or shall we pass them the chosen poems with the footnotes,  
 Ring the bell on their thoughts, period their play,  
 Make laws for averages and plans for means,  
 Print one history book for a whole province, and  
 Let ninety thousand reach page 10 by Tuesday?

As I gather the inadequate paper evidence, I hear  
 Across the neat campus lawn  
 The professional mowers drone, clipping the inch-high green

## FOR R A S

(1925-1943)

He left the country that he loved so well,  
 Shawbridge, Piedmont, and the Tremblant runs,  
 And climbed to the center of war by his own trail  
 Barred from the easy virtue of enlistment  
 He fought a private battle for his chance to share the world's crisis

On his way to the scenes of death, he met death  
 Death reached out with an eagerness that matched his own  
 Death violent, Atlantic, submarine  
 The challenge so absolute was met absolutely

It was as though there were special need to attend  
 To this boy's daring, as though if his will survived



We should survive too easily, win with too sudden success,  
Win without understanding the fulness of our penalty

He bore in his single hand the essence of our tragedy

I tell you no one anywhere brought more than this  
Not the comrades who crouched shoulder to shoulder at Stalingrad,  
Not Buerling, superb in his skill,  
Nor the heroisms noted in the field of battle  
Results are not the measure of these deeds

I write of him because he wished to write,  
And because he had time only to pour  
The table of his contents upon the historic water

WAR NEWS

On every front, and in the reversing air  
The guns and planes carry our argument  
None can resist    This is our feat of war  
This is our self-assertion    We are content  
We dress our purpose in the accustomed cloth  
Whole cut from great abstractions, oversize  
We are immensely conscious of our worth  
And ask no more than slaughtered enemies  
This is our one supreme desire, to find  
The unconditionally surrendered foe  
Begging for mercy at our conquering heels  
Meanwhile the little wheels within the wheels  
Mesh in the former grooves, the Churchills bow,  
And weathering the gale, we foster the whirlwind

VILLANELLE FOR OUR TIME

From bitter searching of the heart,  
Quickened with failure and with pain,  
We rise to play our global part

This is the faith from which we start  
Men shall know commonwealth again  
From bitter searching of the heart

We loved the easy and the smart,  
But now, with keener hand and brain,  
We rise to play our global part

The lesser loyalties depart  
And neither race nor creed remain  
From bitter searching of the heart

Not steering by the venal chart  
That tricked the mass for private gain  
We rise to play our global part

Reshaping narrow law and art  
Whose symbols are the millions slain,  
From bitter searching of the heart  
We rise to play our global part

*F R Scott*

TWO POEMS

TOWARD ANOTHER SPRING

We have made mutations, you and I  
The doors we open close on yesterday,  
On sculptures of ourselves Medusa-tranced  
Tall armored figures in the vestibule

Not through any transoms will thought follow us  
In the new beds even the dreams will be strange,  
It will all be different the silver spoons, the areaways,  
The ticket-girls and the men laughing in the lounge

The mirror pictures you combing a stranger's hair,  
The doorknob is not shaped yet to your hand,  
There are steps in the corridor recollective and troublesome,  
There are the inarticulate faces of the blind

And the stalk of memory shakes a seedless pod,  
In the spent garden plot again are the seasonal rains  
Our growth moves as the stripped branch grows,  
Burying in the root all shapes of other springs

AT LAST BE STILL

Grief should be silent and slow as the risen moon,  
Balanced in stillness and dark at the edge of the sky,  
Instead of an endless fire tormenting the wrists,  
Rising at last in a wordless and futile cry

JOHN DILLON HUSBAND

Only the hungry heart should lean upon silence  
Calling without a voice, listening for no sound,  
But the random stirring of the air  
Thrusts us in dreadful weeping upon the alien ground

Later, when the smoke of autumn lies on the restless air,  
We should discover the sunlit wheat, and rise, and go  
Under the flight of birds, the fall of rain,  
Grief should at last be quiet, be still    It is not so  
*John Dillon Husband*

OLD MEN A'T AIR BASE

.    Think, John, how you shouldered your way across the deck  
One war ago, risking your neck  
For the sight of a periscope    No life belt about  
You, no thought of it till you heard the corporal shout

Cautions are not for young men, ventures are  
Think back to boyhood tag—Is time too far?—  
How you screwed your sleeves to the prickles of your arms,  
How cunningly quick you saw what tactic prong  
Of invisible fork you would shunt your flight along,  
Seeking escapes no more than you sought alarms

The man in the Airacobra is young, John, irrepressibly  
You cannot at your age  
Thumb the leaves of your mind to however wise a page  
And find his outlook in your theory

It is the game of tag, John, grown up and stern  
Not to be safe.    To strike an inch from death and then return.

SEVEN POEMS

OF ISLANDS

Of all the islands sailing down the west,  
of islands sailing north and south and east,  
it is not islands you remember best,—  
or better, have forgotten least

It is not land, the quick, sure touch of trees,  
not all the lusty continent which sense reveals,  
which one day flaps peninsulas like palsied knees,  
and swims away as secretly as eels

It is not islands It is less than islands,  
land still land until at once you see  
you have come upon a stretch of pale lagoon  
and earth in its entirety

and since it is an interim of sea and air,  
even as islands ultimately are,  
and the waves are clouds which crawl back up the sky  
over a sunken star

then even if the land is land no man can mend,  
which salt nor sand nor star can clean,  
this is the island which our lives defend  
where life must end, and death put forth its green

POEM NEAR <sup>r</sup>PEARL HARBOR

Angelica, the Princess Pomponelli!  
    ( she is the former Vera Gross )  
The Prince he died of beriberi  
    ( the teeth of the Princess are decidedly false )

—The ladies who gather on the limb of the tree  
play bridge by flashlight near the sea —

Darkness falls, the breakers break  
Over the breakers Diamond Head  
exhibits like a wedding cake  
its crest of gingerbread.

The beacons on the orange sands  
thrust their knives in indigo,  
it will not crumble in the bridegroom's hands—  
he left here long ago

—The ladies with flashlight under the tree  
tap the pineapple in their tea —

Their smile is set in nickelplate  
where late beneath the slanting triggers  
an Oklahoman Pharmacist's Mate  
stacked the smoking niggers.

Darkness falls, the tension mounts  
Their eyelids blue as the skins of grapes,  
they grip their shabby honor counts  
of tinsel-throated jackanapes

O what are they seeking yêar after year?  
Will the moribund never be bedridden?  
What have they come to the sea to hear?  
Have they children somewhere? Do they keep them hidden?

Angelica, the Princess Pomponelli!  
(she is the former Vera Gross)  
*I know that could not be confetti*  
*The teeth of the Princess are decidedly false!*

EPITHALAMIUM

O orange were her underclothes,  
her nails were hothouse pink,  
when Rosalind, in jungle rose,  
was wed in a roller rink

The bells ring true True-blue True-blue  
Draw the ale and fill the dipper  
They did not fly to Hono - lu - lu  
in the cabin of a clipper

With the frontal lobe of Jackie Cooper,  
and the soul of General Grant,  
Paul is now a paratrooper  
and Roz rivets in a plant

The bells ring true True-blue True-blue  
Draw the ale and fill the dipper  
They did not fly to Hono - lu - lu  
in the cabin of a clipper



They lie in state from six<sup>ty</sup> to eight  
at the Mars Moontide Motel.  
Of the union that I celebrate  
more I may not tell

The bells ring true    True-blue True-blue  
Draw the ale and fill the dipper  
They did not fly to Hono - lu - lu  
in the cabin of a clipper

AU TOMBEAU DU MARÉCHAL PET-DE-NAIN

Travelers, pause—and lift your caps  
Bow your heads in the sun.  
If your ears are good, you can hear perhaps  
taps at Carcassonne

He mounted upon his snow-white steed,  
and led his people down the drain  
with the Order of the Centipede  
on a shield of cellophane

His people lived on rosy roots,  
their faith was sorely shaken  
he rode to the Spa and slicked his boots,  
and had his picture taken

His people asked him what to do—  
there was little to be done  
he said they were through red white and blue  
—He had stopped them at Verdun

Travelers, pause—and lift your caps  
Bow your heads in the sun  
If your ears are good, you can hear perhaps  
taps at Carcassonne

3 FOR 25

Downing his drink to toasts of cut-rate jokes,  
the sailor on the 10-day leave, the Machinist's Mate  
2nd, squares his tousled halo for the folks,  
and looks into the camera as at fate  
There where the painted palm tree's tonic sway  
recedes, authentic as a tourist folder,  
vast bridges spanning a blue bay,  
as real as horseshoes float back from his shoulder

10 days is not enough, but the Machinist's Mate  
2nd leaves of his life this urgent pose,  
these meerschaum fingers, eyes like dominoes  
and this one act, like all his holiday,  
is right only if he remains in black and white  
when camera clicks with quick, conclusive fact

COLUMBUS CIRCLE SWING

Old Mr Christopher sailed an egg  
to prove that it was round  
while the man at the keg with the wooden leg  
stood his ground

Little Sir Banker bought up some blocks,  
stacked them one upon another,  
and everyone lived in a fur-lined box  
and thought that he would smother

O where shall we go when it rains all the day,  
and what shall we do when it's over  
will the day be as bright when it dawns at Calais  
as it was after dark at Dover?

Brothers Wright, perfecting flight,  
let the rabbit out of the hat  
Now overhead the quadruped  
disputes his habitat

Little Franklin Delano went to tea  
in the middle of the Atlantic,  
told all the world that it soon would be free,—  
the world was still pretty frantic.

O where shall we go when it rains all the day,  
and what shall we do when it's over  
will the day be as bright when it dawns at Calais  
as it was after dark at Dover?

Will it end with a *Ho* with a *Hip* with a *Hem*?  
Will it swing from the top of a tree?  
Will it minister all that begins with an *M*—  
Muchness and Mirabeau? Massah and Me?

The world's an egg, ah through and through  
It was decided for us  
You can always change a line or two,  
you cannot change the chorus

O where shall we go when it rains all the day,  
and what shall we do when it's over  
will the day be as bright when it dawns at Calais  
as it was after dark at Dover?

"ABRUPTLY ALL THE PALM TREES"

Abruptly all the palm trees rose like parasols,  
and sunlight danced, and green to greenness gave  
Birds flew forth and cast like waterfalls  
shadow upon shade

Where the crab with its linoleum colors crawls,  
and coral combs the crystal-caverned sea,  
we stood, our blood as bright and fringed as shawls  
before the beautiful, progressing leaf

Abruptly all the palm trees rose like parasols,  
and green was the green which green to greenness gave  
Dimension crumbled, Time lay down its walls  
And all the world went wading towards the wave

*William Jay Smith*

## RACIAL BIAS AND NEGRO POETRY

A PROVINCIAL view of life and an intensely slanted approach mark almost all poetry by Negroes, and these factors operate as serious limitations. A body of experience that is potentially significant as subject for poetry fails to be adequately presented because of these limitations.

One would suppose that orientations at hand in our culture, such as the humanistic notion of the natural dignity of man and the Christian stress on human brotherhood, would offer a rich set of values for the Negro poet to draw on. Yet such notions are seldom made use of, mainly because the scheme of ideas behind Negro poetry is rarely rooted centrally in these values. Instead, it is bound up with the values that have crystalized in the course of the defensive maneuvering of a minority against a hostile group. Negro verse is provincial inasmuch as it is the result of an environment that sees narrowly and with bigotry on all matters involving the Negro. The following circumstances illustrate one or two of the main features of this specialized environment.

The Negro has a profound sense of his own humanity and his own adequacy. The whites, on the whole, however, challenge this self-appraisal. To them the Negro is a servile creature, and this state of mind exists to an influential extent within the white audience of the Negro poet. *Incident*, by Countee Cullen, indicates how this disparagement of a people affects the subject-matter of their poetry.

Once riding in Old Baltimore,  
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,  
I saw a Baltimorean  
Keep looking straight at me

Now I was eight and very small,  
And he was no whit bigger,  
And so I smiled, but he poked out  
His tongue and called me "Nigger "

I saw the whole of Baltimore  
From May until December,  
Of all the things that happened there  
That's all that I remember

The merit of the verse as poetry is not under consideration. The consideration at hand is this: that one who denies the Negro's worth as a human being will imperfectly understand the heavily-loaded meaning of the pivotal term "Nigger." Such meaning as plays around the term will be only partly grasped by the racially biased reader. For the same word, while highly charged to both groups, carries widely different meanings to white and Negro. Similarly much of the sense of the following poem by Lewis Alexander will fail to carry over owing to a blocked receptivity to its point of view.

Lo, lo, I am black, but I am comely too,  
Black as the night, black as the deep dark caves,  
I am the scion of a race of slaves  
Who helped to build a nation strong that you  
And I may stand within the world's full view,  
Fearless and firm as dreadnaughts on rough waves,  
Holding banner high whose floating braves  
The opposition of the tried and untrue  
Casting an eye of love upon my face,  
Seeing a newer light within my eyes,  
A rarer beauty in your brother race  
Will merge upon your visioning full wise,  
Though I am black my heart through love is pure,  
And you through love my blackness shall endure!

The beliefs stated in these two poems fail to meet among whites. Doubt as to the Negro's full merit and humanity shut off the audience's sensitivity to the values native to the

Negro's vision This poetry is born in a Jim Crow setting saturated with traditional beliefs quite at variance with those held by the poet Lack of rapport leaves inaccessible to whites the Negro's attitudes toward life

Some poems have succeeded in influencing this predominantly hostile white audience These are an order of verse that is highly communicable, capable of making its effect before the antagonisms of the reader are aroused to reject the values expressed Note, in this group of poems, that experience is deftly slanted In *Nigger*, by Frank Horne, the credentials of Negro dignity are conveyed through the accomplishments of certain historical figures

Little Black boy  
Chased down the street—  
"Nigger, nigger, never die,  
Black face an' shiny eye,  
      "Nigger     nigger     nigger     "

Hannibal     Hannibal  
Bangin' through the Alps,  
Licked the proud Romans,  
Ran home with their scalps—  
      "Nigger     nigger     nigger     "

Toussaint     Toussaint  
Made the French flee,  
Fought like a demon,  
Set his people free—  
      'Nigger     nigger     nigger     "

Jesus     Jesus,  
Son of the Lord  
—Spit in his face  
—Nail him on a board—  
      "Nigger     nigger     nigger     "

These same tactical means are to be found in Claude McKay's

well-known sonnet *If We Must Die* has such vigor that recognition of the Negro is evoked by associating him with approved forms of heroism. A rise in status is assured, at least for the duration of, and perhaps beyond, the poetic experience

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot,  
If we must die, O let us boldly die,

Like men we'll face the murderous cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

*Tired* is another in this group which exhibits a competence not found in the opening group of poems. It, too, announces its orientation before racial prejudice interposes itself

I am tired of work, I am tired of building up somebody else's civilization  
Let us take a rest, M'Lissy Jane

I will go down to the Last Chance Saloon, drink a gallon or two of  
gin, shoot a game or two of dice and sleep the rest of the night  
on one of Mike's barrels

You will let the old shanty go to rot, the white people's clothes turn to  
dust, and the Calvary Baptist Church sink to the bottomless pit

Throw the children into the river, civilization has given us too many  
It is better to die than to grow up and find that you are colored

The feeling of desperation and revolt works in a cleansing fashion within the body of this poem and leaves the prejudices bereft momentarily of their strength. The Negro's feeling of repudiation and isolation is successfully conveyed to the reader and something of the tragic quality of Negro life is captured.

It is this bigoted white world that Negro poetry seeks to come to grips with, a world that would limit the breadth of its meaning. The difficulties for Negro verse are, however, internal as well as external.



Negro verse deals with what might be called pre-individualistic values. Individualism is the emphasis that would oppose the interest of the individual to that of the group, state, society, Nature, and the like. He is the measure of all things. Thus, whatever happens is significant because it happens to him. When this emphasis takes on some dimension, whatever happens to the protagonist then takes on a deep relevance and symbolic power for others. These assumptions form part of the value-system of most white writers.

In the pre-individualistic thinking of the Negro, the stress is on the group. Instead of seeing in terms of the individual, the Negro sees in terms of "races," masses of peoples separated from other masses according to color. Hence, an act rarely bears intent against him as a Negro individual. He is singled out not as a person but as a specimen of an ostracized group. He knows that he never exists in his own right but only to the extent that others hope to make the race suffer vicariously through him.

The thinking Negro realizes that "race" and not the individual is the smallest unit of which whites are aware. That fact causes a certain expansion of group importance. An ensemble of traits being black, illiterate, "repulsive," "inferior," etc., causes Negroes to bind themselves more closely together and to feel isolated from the larger whole of humanity. Loyalty to race grows and the concept "race" achieves an importance rivaling that of individualism.

This is not to imply that the sense of being men is destroyed by the emphasis on the group. Still, the more *palpable* realization is the awareness that the Negro is an alien in and not a component part of society. The separatist feelings, not the in-

tegrative ones, flourish *Is It Because I Am Black?* is a testimonial to the effects of this condition

Why do men smile when I speak,  
And call my speech  
The whimpering of a babe  
That cries but knows not what it wants?  
Is it because I am black?

Why do men sneer when I arise  
And stand in their councils,  
And look them eye to eye  
And speak their tongues?  
Is it because I am black?

So common is this style of thinking, all it needs is identification, not documentation

Only occasionally does the Negro poet escape this pre-individualistic, group point of view and express his more general experience as an individual. It is the presence of this limitation, only partially broken through, if at all, that is to a large extent responsible for the dissatisfaction one feels about Negro verse, and it is a limitation, at least in the opinion of this writer, which detracts from whatever poetic skill may be otherwise present. It is to be hoped that the present war will create an environment more favorable to humanistic goals, and in doing so mark another advance in the elimination of the two factors which I have attempted to point out as thus far operating disastrously on Negro poetry: not only the white bias due to which its appreciation has remained partial, but also the self-conscious "race" values which impair and delimit the vision of the artist.

*Edward Bland*

REVIEWS

MILLAY COLLECTED

*Collected Lyrics of Edna St Vincent Millay* Harper and Brothers

*And all this time  
Death beating the door in*

THE TRUTH is that Edna Millay's poetry has been damned with too much praise. If her work had bloomed quietly for twenty-five years in the nourishing privacy of a handful of devoted followers, there might be flourishing now a widespread cult of happy admiration for at least a dozen fine poems that bear a personality at its best expression and that would be, of course, untrammelled by common fame and the fame of a hundred lesser poems in the same books. The sort of development that occurred in the career of Lizette Woodworth Reese, for example, and heaven knows how many more. To be sure, qualities in the work itself are basic to any explanation of Miss Millay's popularity, nevertheless, the praise became so extravagant that it assured a reaction which has begun to look like an almost equally extravagant, or faddish reaction.

No doubt there were always dissenters. My supposition is, however, that the first considerable critical examination of Miss Millay's work was Horace Gregory's brilliant review of *Wine From These Grapes* in the *New York Herald Tribune Books* in 1934. I have purposely not looked it up, but my recollection of the review is of how penetratingly it related Miss Millay's entire work and the mood of the postwar undergraduate, and of how judiciously it assessed the character and limitations of that work. In the decade since, criticism has lost the judiciousness and cast

away the penetration. A new attitude toward Edna St Vincent Millay has pretty thoroughly been adopted by the literati, and if her popular audience is still not only faithful but large, she has—so far as I can determine—failed to excite any recent collegiate intelligentsia. The greatest insult you can offer any young woman poet in this country is to warn her that she may be the Edna Millay of her generation, which, being interpreted, means that she is in danger of glibness and of popularity.

Now if under the praise and the dispraise there are reasons for both to be found in Miss Millay's poetry, the fact remains that the adulation and the abuse have little to do with the worth of that poetry, since both have been excessive. They do merit preliminary mention because they make so difficult an attempt to write of a body of poetry that is neither the most unworthy nor the greatest since Sappho's. The attempt is particularly worth while just now (after all, you can't be sure that a new postwar generation will not rediscover Millay!) because of the one-volume publication of Miss Millay's *Collected Lyrics*.

I think we may begin by being pretty sure that in this book and in the *Collected Sonnets* published in the same handsome format in 1941, we have the work on which Miss Millay's eventual reputation must rest. Her poetic plays all seem too literary to be durable, *Conversation at Midnight* is an obvious tour de force of a poet whose talent is pre-eminently lyric, and as for her political verse, a somewhat hysterical emotionalism runs merely thin in *Make Bright the Arrows* and overflows embarrassingly in *The Murder of Lidice*. Anticipating time, we may as well forget these other books. So my text is a simple one (and except for the fury and the furor about Miss Millay would be ridiculous) that in this *Collected Lyrics* and its predecessor,

the *Collected Sonnets*, there are some very poor poems and some very able poems

It is sometimes not at all difficult to spot the poorer poems, but sometimes it is because the reader, soon aware that Miss Millay is repetitious in her moods and subjects, must try to determine what poem really sums up and surpasses half a dozen others that are very much like it. Again this is what time will do in its inexorable reaping, and no contemporary can perfectly anticipate the process.

All her poems may be said to be variations on a theme announced by Housman: "Let us endure awhile and see injustice done." Occasionally this injustice is political and social in the sense uppermost in Housman's line, but generally with Miss Millay it is personal, and at her best it is always personal. Here are some of the things she has said so often in her verse:

This is a lovely world, almost unbearably beautiful as a work of nature, but the poet is usually, in this expression, writing from some particular point on earth which is markedly less desirable than another she is recalling, and therefore she writes in sorrow. Sorrow in general is a constant mood with her, and its most typical expression is through sorrow in love. Though her love poetry has ranged from the flip to the marmoreal, from the casual to the frenzied, it has elaborated at both extremes and all the way between that love is (1) fickle and (2) irresistible. A very short poem called *Being Young and Green* sums up (though I don't cite it as a superior poem) this whole conclusion:

Being young and green, I said in love's despite  
Never in the world will I to living wight  
Give over, ah my mind  
To anyone,

Hang out its ancient secrets in the strong wind  
To be shredded and faded

Oh, me, invaded  
And sacked by the wind and the sun!

Miss Millay's explanation for this sweet disaster is stated as well as anywhere in her verse in the concluding couplet of one of her early sonnets

Pity me that the heart is slow to learn  
What the swift mind beholds at every turn

From her poem *Mariposa* the conviction that

Whether I be false or true,  
Death comes in a day or two

was lightened and extenuated through the famous *A Few Figs From Thistles*, and this theme runs with its own small variations through her work, the impudence changing to bitterness and sometimes, as in that unfortunate sonnet beginning "I too beneath your moon, almighty Sex," to wholly humorless arrogance

As deliberately as anywhere in her work, I suppose, Miss Millay seeks to objectify her conclusions in the eighteen sonnets called *Epitaph on the Race of Man*. I like a couple of these as well as anything Edna Millay has ever written, but as a whole it is a sequence that suffers from repetitiousness and from the later grand manner of the poet. No one can sound so profound as Miss Millay at her falsest! However, as I understand them, these sonnets portray man's victories over his environment and conclude that his tragedy lies in his inevitable defeat by himself. It is a great theme, and sometimes Miss Millay handles it with great beauty and genuine (not bogus) dignity. Two of the sonnets are certainly among her best: the much admired *See where Capella with her golden kids* and the not enough admired *Observe*

*how Myanoshita cracked in two.*<sup>5</sup> (By the way, if the reader will look at that sonnet and then at the two immediately following he will see what I mean by the repetitiousness—how immediately the poet says over again, not once but twice, what she has just said and has said better.)

Her poems say a hundred times that life is sad. At least as often, her poems say that death is the bitterest pill of all, and they fight against it, wail upon it, and defy death. This, when you come to think of it, adds up to a lot of troubled emotion. Maybe if Miss Millay had ever made up her mind, we should have had less poetry from her, and that would be unfortunate, nonetheless, by these conflicting emotions she has remained in an intellectual jam. There is obvious sentimentality in this contradiction, it afflicts a great deal of her verse and explains, I think, why the verse leaves us dissatisfied. Here too I suspect we come closest to the reason for Miss Millay's attractiveness for the undergraduate, or adolescent, mind.

(I seem to be saying unkind things, but I honestly want—as I implied heretofore—to try to cut down to what is firmest in this poetry.)

In other words, the mood of self-pity is exceptionally attractive to the young, and Miss Millay's verse has employed that mood (or vice versa) many, many times. The popularity of her poetry, of course, stems very largely from what we may call its familiarity—simple forms in rhyme and stanza, resemblances (whether or not fortunate) to poetry already well known, occasionally skillful reworkings of particular styles all the way from the Elizabethan to that of Robinson Jeffers. At her best, Miss Millay brings vigor and freshness to traditional forms and stamps them with a new personality more positively than any of her con-

temporaries has ever done. Thus, though you may feel *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver* is a shade literary, a shade too conscious of what it is doing, I think you must conclude that it is a strong and moving hymn to imagination and unselfish love. And with such a poem as *The Poet and His Book* I think we must give over all reservations, its power and feeling are genuine and are expressed with real passion. In that poem, certainly one of her best, what might be called self-pity surpasses itself by an acceptance of physical death and by sounding the very human desire for a kind of immortality. And in such smaller poems as *Travel* ("The railroad track is miles away"), *Eel-Grass*, *Recuerdo* ("We were very tired, we were very merry"), and *Feast* ("I drank at every vine") her various romantic attitudes find their summation in memorable lyrics.

Undoubtedly the many influences on Miss Millay's poetry will sometime be studied. Among them will be found an astonishing variety. The Marlowe ranting of those early poems, *Interim* and *The Suicide*, seems to shove over at times even for Miltonics and a quieting note from George Herbert. The medieval gimcrackery of the imagery in so many of the *Fatal Interview* sonnets will bear examination for what it shows of the literary assuming itself to be literature. There are a surprising number of ventures into free verse, and surely Elinor Wylie is present in *Moriturus*.

If I could have  
Two things in one  
The peace of the grave,  
And the light of the sun,

and so on. Miss Millay's admiration for Jeffers is well known and it shows itself frequently in her later work, most notably in *Apostrophe to Man* since there it is not only Jeffers' style but



Jeffers' thought, and in such 'a poem as *Modern Declaration*, which, by the way, has as a preface to a declaration of constant love these very appealing lines

I, having loved ever since I was a child a few things, never having  
wavered  
In these affections, never through shyness in the houses of the rich or  
in the presence of clergymen having denied these loves,  
Never when worked upon by cynics like chiropractors having grunted or  
clicked a vertebra to the discredit of these loves,  
Never when anxious to land a job having diminished them by a con-  
vinving smile, or when befuddled by drink  
Jeered at them through heartache or lazily fondled the fingers of their  
alert enemies,

Quite aside from the style of that, I think we should observe, as to the sense of it, that it is true Edna Millay has pursued her art according to lights that have varied in her career, but according to those lights with integrity This is not a small matter

Where her poetry has, so to speak, gone wrong is where she has mistaken attitudes for convictions, or mere moods for profound truths (as we all do) Thus, you get the absurd blather, "O world, I cannot hold thee close enough", in *God's World*, and the astounding insistence on so desiring the seashore that she is crying aloud for death by drowning This is the common error of requiring an emotion to bear (if I may paraphrase Miss Wylie, who was talking of something else) a little more than it can bear And along with such sentimentality in Miss Millay's work there has been a rapid loss of humor in its largest or smallest sense and a consequent gain in a grand manner that not only permits medieval impedimenta as aforesaid but even allows such solemn absurdities as celebrating the cleaning of a canary's cage and that thoughtful dinosaur that

held aside her heavy tail  
And took the seed, and heard the seed confined  
Roar in the womb,

These elements were always in Miss Millay's poetry. The humorless dullness of her early *Ode to Silence* is a pertinent example. The disproportionate overloading of an emotion was done full-length in *The Blue Flag in the Bog*. But the simpler elements have persisted, too, and it is those we come back to.

If the poet would go "screaming to God for death by drowning," she would all the same on another occasion—in the poem called *Exiled*—express the same nostalgia with control.

I am too long away from water  
I have a need of water near

And we believe it. And I should like especially to note her marked ability of observation by several small and scattered examples among many.

the redness  
Of little leaves opening stickily

Again

There rings a hammering all day,  
And shingles lie about the doors,  
In orchards near and far away  
The grey woodpecker taps and bores,  
And men are merry at their chores,  
And children earnest at their play

There the wonderful word is "shingles." And again

Near some naked blackberry hoops  
Dim with purple chalk

And once more

Now comes night, smelling of box and privet  
And the rain falls fine

There is in the poem *Renascence* a simplicity which is at times girlish, legitimately so, of course. It holds the seed of

Edna Millay's best poetry    In her subsequent work this girlishness sometimes became unpleasantly coy and mawkish, as for instance in the poem called *The Little Hill*    On the other hand, in *Elaine* and *A Visit to the Asylum*, bathos, however perilously, is really escaped, something pathetic and moving takes place, and again in such a small but specific and affecting poem as *Chorus* with its elegiac

She will dance no more  
In her narrow shoes,  
Sweep her narrow shoes  
From the closet floor

To the poems and two *Epitaph* sonnets I have mentioned with praise I should want to add, in any attempted Millay canon, six other sonnets    the two fairly early ones beginning, respectively, "What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why" and "Grow not too high, grow not too far from home"—the first because it seems to me the most memorable summary of her oft-repeated early love poetry, and the second because it is her own best statement of her own best art—and four from the *Fatal Interview* sequence    *Not in a silver casket cool with pearls, I dreamed I moved among the Elysian fields, Love is not all, it is not meat nor drink and Oh, sleep forever in the Latman cave*    These largely escape the copybook influences and the inflated manner of so much of the rest, and though they move on a sedate plane they do so with immaculate dignity    In those instances, at least, Miss Millay has controlled even in the grand manner a basic simplicity    Perhaps they are her best work    In any case they belong with the completely realized poetry of our times

*Winfield Townley Scott*

1  
SOVIET POETRY BETWEEN TWO WARS

*Soviet Poets and Poetry*, by Alexander Kaun University of California Press

For all who are concerned with Soviet Russian culture the publication of Alexander Kaun's historical survey of Soviet poetry is a long overdue event. Already, to date, a number of surveys of Soviet prose have appeared in English, such as Mirsky's, Struve's, and Reavey and Slonim's, but the poetry of the Soviets has been generally neglected. Only anthologies have been available—among the best those by Yarmolinsky and Deutsch, and Reavey and Slonim—which did not cover the recent developments, or else contained very limited selections, such as *New Directions*, 1941. Kaun's book is the first of its kind. With the ever rising interest in Soviet literature, this book is an indispensable tool, an excellent introduction to the complex field of modern Russian poetry.

"There is hardly any other literature in which prose prevailed so definitely over poetry—at least in what concerns the values that proved exportable," says G. A. Borgese in his recent book *Common Cause*. This is no doubt true if one views Russian literature from without. Certainly it is Russian prose that proved to be *the* exportable commodity. But such a statement raises an old and unanswerable question: is poetry exportable at all? Be that as it may, poetry is not only written in the Soviet Union today but also read. It is read widely, it is recited, it is passed from mouth to mouth, it is sung—in short it is part of Russian life. The need for poetry has become great during the present war. Kaun makes this point clear: it seems that in times of catastrophe it is poetry that prevails in Russia and eclipses prose.

During the revolution of 1917 and during the civil war, poetry reached unprecedented heights, at least quantitatively. It became part of the revolution itself. During the years of "reconstruction" the vigor of revolutionary poetic pathos, of messianic and cosmic enthusiasm gradually lost its power. Prose came to the foreground again. Kaun is the first to note the astonishing growth of poetry since the German invasion. There it is again—poetry—needed by the civilians and by millions of soldiers, poetry sweeping through all the fronts, from one end of the country to the other, poetry that reflects the heroism of the Russian soldier, that sings of his love for his country, for his beloved and his child, and of his gigantic will to win. Kaun's translations and interpretations show that this new war poetry is much more simple, much more lyrical, much more "human" than the revolutionary poetry of twenty-five years ago.

It is a pity that comparatively little space is devoted to this recent development. Probably it could not be helped. In two hundred and three pages Kaun covers a vast and complex field. He discusses Russian poetry from the pre-revolutionary symbolists, who generated most of the post-revolutionary "isms," up to the work of the youngest poets who were not even known before the German invasion. He gives us examples of lyrical poetry, of antilyrical poetry, of journalistic verse pamphlets, of songs, ballads, fairy tales, and even of the modern oral folk *bylina*. In fact the very range of the survey is perhaps a drawback, there being too much crowded into too little space. Also, considering the shortness of the book in its present form, there is an unhappy proportion between the space devoted to poetry as such and that devoted to the peculiar, almost abnormal, intricacies of Soviet Russian poetic and artistic theorization. Although the title is

*Soviet Poets and Poetry*, poetry'suffers as against the theory of poetry With minute care Kaun reports and analyzes the long and bitter fight between the formalists and the social realists, between all sorts of "isms" (which the Russians love so much) and the various proletarian groups of poets and writers (such as the Proletcult and its derivatives up to the famous RAPP)

Kaun's concern with theories, however, is necessary to make the most important point clear out of the confusion, the theoretical chaos, and the intolerance of strictly proletarian artists toward so-called fellow-travelers (an intolerance to which Lenin was opposed), there arose finally free, youthful, spontaneous, lyrical poetry "April 23, 1932, is an important date in the history of Soviet letters," Kaun says in the preface "On that day the Central Committee of the ruling Party issued a resolution which is considered by writers of the Soviet Union as a declaration of independence By dissolving the RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) and allied groups, the resolution set aside a factor that had terrorized individual authors and crippled all creative activity The policy of regimentation was denounced, and an end was put to the division of artists into the privileged and sacrosanct 'proletarians' and the suspected and persecuted 'fellow-travelers' and other 'class enemies'"

In the most recent phase of Soviet poetry "above all, the poem meets Tolstoy's first requirement of art—that it be understandable

Like Prokofyev in music, Tvardovsky and other leading Soviet poets have successfully followed this path of producing work of the highest level, designed not for exclusive circles but for millions of eager and critical readers" It would have been desirable to show more examples of this "work of the highest level"

Some of Kaun's translations are almost in prose. The content is reproduced with great care. It is well so, only there should have been more.

Vera Sandomarsky

#### TWO WAR ANTHOLOGIES

*The New Treasury of War Poetry, 1939 to 1943*, edited by George Herbert Clarke    Houghton Mifflin

*War Poems of the United Nations*, edited by Joy Davidman  
Dial Press

Since Mr. Clarke calls his anthology a "treasury" of war poetry we may be forgiven a moderately optimistic anticipation of its contents. However, what might have been gratitude for his preserving in book form a few of the poems which we did not bother to clip from magazines when we first saw them, turns to irritation at his including with them the many which might better have been forgotten.

That all the poems in a collection cannot be equally memorable is, of course, true, and all the more reason for the anthologist, who has voluntarily accepted a Jehovah role, to make up for the deficiencies of his flock by an honest as well as masterly presentation of its assets.

Back in 1918, Mr. Clarke edited his first *Treasury of War Poetry*, of which Alice Corbin Henderson writing in *POETRY*, said "The war itself is not responsible for the many bad poems of which it is the occasion," but said further, "the sifting of war poems would necessarily be gradual" and that a "good service" had been done in beginning it. In 1921 a second series of this anthology appeared and represented, according to Harriet Mon-

roe "The war muse's too sober second thought—neither her first fierce inspiration nor her final verdict"

But Mr Clarke's "treasury" of World War I sold over 50,000 copies, and here, with World War II, we have Professor Clarke doing a "good service" again His Introduction tells us we will find no "poetic diction" that is "mere prettification" in the volume As we do not question his honesty, we can only conclude that his idea of prettification differs from our own The following lines from Muriel Newton's poems *Death in May* are not only mawkish but ambiguous

Out of Life's dream he died  
Into joy's living tide

And isn't George Malcolm's *Lament* a prettification? Take any stanza, the first will do

As I walked under the African moon,  
I heard the piper play,  
And the last place ever I heard that tune  
Was a thousand miles away

Lest we appear captious, however, we hasten to say that there are inclusions for which we are grateful, notably Stephen Spender's *To Poets and Armenians*, Carl Sandburg's *Take a Letter to Dmitri Shostakovitch*, Babette Deutsch's *To My Son*, and the poems by Charles Schiff, Robert Nathan and Oscar Williams

The arrangement is at times forced and at times haphazard The sections *China* and *South Africa* each contains one poem, within the rather hazy category, *Incidents and Aspects*, are twenty-six poems having in common only the fact that they were presumably written between 1939 and 1943

It is, I think, time to demand of our anthologists a few superior traits of their own We might have expected, in this instance, a less amiable application of the shears In any case the mere ability to separate the sheep from the goats—too often the only



qualification with which the rôle of anthologist is assumed—is not enough. And it seems to represent about the extent of Mr Clarke's discernment.

Joy Davidman, in editing *War Poets of the United Nations*, has tightened the invisible unity of her anti-fascist contributors by geographically grouping them behind 1939 borders. A pre-war map of Europe is, in this manner, evoked. And to the poignancy of the poems there is added, inevitably, that of historical events. The heading *Austria* has the factual simplification: "Hitler's seizure of Austria sent many of that country's anti-fascist writers to concentration camps, others became refugees to England, the United States, or Mexico, where they are carrying on the fight against Nazism." Both heading and amplification add their refrain to Theodore Kramer's understatements:

Who knocked at the door?  
Don't cry, my dear  
Pack me some clothes  
Yes, darling, they're here

The group-heading *Poland* unites the grieving of Polish and Jewish refugees, that of France echoes Louis Aragon's despair:

What I am remembering  
is a Paris I will always hold,  
as my lips will always hold their grief,  
only her last despair could make me leave

Though these European poems are translations, they protest what they know at first hand, and of the twenty countries represented, it is those, whose authors were eyewitnesses to their own tragedy, which have the most impact. The Latin American and United States selections are on a level with those in Professor Clarke's anthology. The simple foreword, the group headings and the recapitulation of events, however, present them in their most favorable light. For these diplomacies Miss Davidman is, alone, responsible.

M. S.

DISMAL YEW AND DISMAL ME

*The Last Man*, by Weldon Kees The Colt Press, San Francisco

In the first place there is no doubt that Weldon Kees is involved in a serious relationship with the world and words. Although he does not advertise himself as a young man with a conscience, he quite evidently is one, and, what is perhaps equally important, he has the ability so to arrange the words that they convey his specific impressions truly and provocatively. It is, therefore, unfortunate that he does not use his ability to its and his best advantage. This first book is full of soft spots, and while it is never as agreeable to point out the bad as to praise the good, it is slightly more important to the health of the next book.

To call attention to the title and to a page of clever and embarrassing verse captioned *Subtitle* is not a superficial gesture but serves to illustrate what I believe is the most menacing fault in Kees' poetry. The first and last lines of the poem are

We present for you this evening  
A movie of death

Sit forward, let the screen reveal  
Your heritage, the logic of your destiny

If you can't add beyond two and two, you can still find this sum. We have here the unmistakable symptoms of that popular *malaise* of the twenties, that is, of the postwar before it became the prewar world—disciplined despair. You've missed the Disney and you have to sit through the Dreiser, because

There are  
No exits here, no guards to bribe,  
No washroom windows

The attitude is the particular mark of Eliot and some of his contemporaries and is valid in its particular context. In almost all

the other contexts, and especially in this instance, it is unimpressive and is reminiscent of the early teens when the fact of our mortality is sad and beautiful, when the "dismal yew" is a rather appealing symbol, and the years still as long as the long, long thoughts. Mr. Kees is not the last man, and some rather pleasant things will happen to many of us if we are as realistic about the postwar world as we are about the present catastrophe. One wants to say to the poet

Should know the Elizabethans had<sup>you</sup>  
Sweeneys and Mrs. Porters too

But it is entirely unnecessary, as, in *The Speakers*, he says it for himself. As one is moved to point out the flaws only when the material seems worthy of taking the trouble to remove them, I should like to point out that the dirge philosophy in the book is repeatedly contradicted.

Not only in theme but in style as well is there this derivative-ness. The manner of the master is here, too, amusing, keen, effective, but nevertheless Eliot and not Kees. If an anthology were to be compiled under the title *Nevertheless Eliot* the result would be voluminous but would scarcely establish any of the poets included. That is certainly not to say that any of them would be consciously imitative. Awareness is only the beginning, there is the further step of recognizing the individual style and securing it.

When one is done with regretting the arid sophistication of much of this book, a good deal remains to be evaluated in more favorable terms. The lyric quality and the good workmanship of *Variations on a Theme by Joyce*, the briskly satirical *White Collar Ballad* and *The Caterpillar and the Men*

From *Cambridge*, the amusing *Obituary* and the delicate and delightful *Fugue*, these and a few more display the talent of the poet

A word of commendation should be added for the excellent job of bookmaking that has been done with this volume, and the obvious pride and pleasure in craftsmanship it demonstrates

K L

#### SPIRIT OF DELIGHT

*Who Loves the Rain and Other Poems*, by Frances Shaw The Lakeside Press, Chicago

Rarely, rarely comest thou, spirit of delight, not only for Shelley on the Italian Coast, but in the field of American poetry of the last thirty years This sheaf binds together various manifestations of that creative power of quiet happiness which always seemed one of Frances Shaw's strongest characteristics, in her personality, and in her poetry

This was true of her in an age of which one may say with reasonable truth that it has rated depression as a virtue in the art of poetry, and ever since the world looked on the novel genius of expression shadowing *The Waste Land*, a philosophy of dismay has been more or less the poetic fashion This poet has had the strength to go her own way without regard to poetic modes Her poems present Middle West phenomena without patronage, are written mainly in basic English, and not too proud to be communicative

What are the poems' subjects? Love, Grief, Death,—Life, as a trial of the quality of the soul

When one by one your dreams have stolen by,  
And blackness fills the night,  
And pain and care,  
Reach up for comfort to the listening sky—  
The coming of the dawn is still a prayer

## POETRY, *A Magazine of Verse*

The poems are sincere and stirring and have a clear music of their own Few love poems tell us much of the beloved But these poems do

Early for the prayer  
The altar dim  
Lonely  
In the church he planned,  
Lonely, I think of him

These arches grew  
In print and chart,  
His dream has taken form  
With subtle art,  
The stone aspiring  
Is of his brain,  
Here I am near him  
And he lives again

The Spanish proverb says that he who has not known pain cannot know joy The spirit of delight in the poems is a spirit that has known pain One wishes many readers might possess this beautiful, open-hearted book

*Edith Franklin Wyatt*

### NEWS NOTES

We received a letter from Edouard Roditi with the following note about the American issue of *Fontaine*, which he helped prepare, together with Frederic Prokosch and Jean Wahl

"Shortly after the Allied landing in North Africa, Max-Pol Fouchet, the editor of *Fontaine*, a French periodical published in Algiers, decided to publish a special issue devoted to contemporary American literature Edited by Jean Wahl, French poet and philosopher, Frederic Prokosch and a few other French and American writers in New York, the American issue of *Fontaine*, designed to create a better understanding among Allies, finally came out in Algiers in the summer of 1943

"The prefaces include an *Imaginary Interview*, by André Gide, on the general subject of American literature, a brief piece written by Julian Green in praise of the peculiarly anxious awareness which seems to be one of the characteristics of twentieth-century literature in general and of

American literature in particular, and an essay by Denis de Rougemont on the brisk rhetoric of American journalism which now permeates nearly all American writing. Max-Pol Fouchet and Jean Wahl also contribute brief forewords, explaining the purpose of the issue and how it was brought together.

"The prose selections, all excellently translated, include T. S. Eliot's essay on *Poetry and Music*, a piece from Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a sample of Steinbeck's narrative style, one of William Faulkner, a piece by Henry Miller, a Saroyan story, an extract of Prokosch's *The Seven Who Fled*, a piece from Caldwell's *Georgia Boy*, and a selection from Gertrude Stein.

"The poetry section includes translations, some of them excellent, of poems by Robert Frost, Adelaide Crapsey, William Carlos Williams, Hermann Hagedorn, Wallace Stevens, Sara Teasdale, Robinson Jeffers, T. S. Eliot, Conrad Aiken, Lola Ridge, Archibald MacLeish, Horace Gregory, Louise Bogan, Carl Sandburg, Mark Van Doren, Allen Tate, Robert Hillier, H. Phelps Putnam, John Crowe Ransom, E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, Langston Hughes, Frederic Prokosch, Marianne Moore, James Agee, Kenneth Patchen, James Laughlin and Vachel Lindsay. In this broad but erratic selection, it is to be regretted that so little distinction is made between poems written some years ago and those of more recent vintage: the foreign reader thus has little opportunity to understand the progression of contemporary American poetry. Besides, too many of the poems are translated in the same style, by Jean Wahl, who thus gives them an appearance of monotony. It is also to be regretted that the brief extracts of Hart Crane's *The Bridge* should have been attributed to Langston Hughes.

"Considering how rapidly the issue was translated and edited, and the difficulties and delays of censored wartime correspondence, *Fontaine* however deserves warm congratulations for having achieved something almost impossible, even if imperfectly and sketchily. It is to be hoped that this will be but an auspicious beginning in revived Franco-American literary relations."

The Library of Congress has received the collection of manuscripts, notes and printer's copies, of the late Elizabeth Madox Roberts, as a gift from the author's brother, Mr. Ivor S. Roberts, of Chicago. Because it includes early notes and drafts, variant versions, discarded material as well as notes by the author telling the circumstances under which individual works came to be written, the collection forms one of the most important literary sources of textual and critical studies in the Library.

The literary life has considerable vitality at the University of Maryland, if one can judge by the rate at which new magazines are founded at that place. The latest is the *Maryland Quarterly*, (fifty cents, \$2 a year) which like the earlier publication, *The Old Line*, has a definitely international

complexion, besides containing the writing of University of Maryland students Stephen Spender Denis Devlin, J F Hendry, Kenneth Patchen, and translations of Gabriela Mistral by H R Hays, are included The magazine is edited by students under the supervision of Norman Macleod, who is in charge of the Creative Writing program at the university The address is College Park, Md

In the News Notes of the last issue we erroneously reported that Oscar Williams had taken part in the series of reading by poets at the New York Public Library It was William Carlos Williams who took part The library reports that many of the readings were attended by over four hundred people—an overflow crowd in an auditorium seating two hundred, necessitating the use of loud speakers in the corridors The library has published a pamphlet, *The Poets Speak*, containing one poem from each poet who participated, with an introduction by May Sarton

The YMHA, Lexington Ave and 92nd St, New York, is sponsoring a series of poets' readings Genevieve Taggard, Muriel Rukeyser, and Allen Tate were announced for the first program on February 17, with Oscar Williams as chairman, and R P Blackmur, Delmore Schwartz, and Mark Van Doren, for the second program on March 2

#### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KARL SHAPIRO has appeared here often, and was awarded our Jeanette Sewell Davis Prize in 1941 and our Levinson in 1942 His most recently published book is *Person, Place and Thing*, and a new volume of his poems, *V-Letter*, will be brought out next month by Reynal and Hitchcock He is a sergeant in the army, and is still serving in the South Pacific

LOUIS ARAGON is one of the best known of contemporary French poets He served with the French army until the fall of France, and was decorated twice His most recent book of poems is *Elsa's Eyes* A novel of his, *The Century Was Young*, was brought out in this country a short time ago by Duell, Sloan and Pearce

ROLFE HUMPHRIES has translated many of Aragon's poems He has also published a translation of Lorca's poetry, *The Poet in New York* A volume of his own verse, *Out of the Jewel*, appeared in 1942

DEAN P JEFFRESS was published here once before, in June, 1941 He is at present a cadet in the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn He is a native of Berkeley, Calif, where he made his home up to the time of his entrance into the service

F R SCOTT is one of the "Montreal Group" of Canadian authors who edited *The McGill Fortnightly Review* He attended Harvard on a Guggenheim Fellowship and is at present on the McGill law faculty

LE GARDE S DOUGHTY is a former newspaperman who lives at present in Augusta, Ga. He has contributed often to POETRY and other periodicals.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH is a lieutenant (jg) in the Navy. He formerly lived in St. Louis, where he taught in the Romance Languages department at Washington University. He has served at various places overseas, and is at present a liaison officer on a French ship. This is his third appearance here.

The following two poets make their first appearance here.

FRANCIS KING writes "I am twenty years of age, unmarried, descendant of Henry King, the seventeenth-century poet. Though born in Adelboden, Switzerland, I spent most of my childhood in India, where my father was a high government official. I was educated at Shrewsbury School and at Balliol College, Oxford, at both of which places I was a classical scholar. I am now, owing to the war, at work on the land. My poems and criticism have appeared in English journals, and one or two poems have found their way into anthologies."

JOHN DILLON HUSBAND teaches English in an Evanston, Illinois, high school. He is a graduate of Northwestern. He is thirty-three years old.

All of our prose contributors except Mr. Bland have appeared before.

EDWARD BLAND, a young Chicagoan, is at present a sergeant in the army, stationed in New York. WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT has been published numerous times in POETRY, with both verse and criticism. He lives in Providence, R. I., where he is on the editorial staff of *The Journal*. He received our Guarantors Prize in 1935. He is the author of three volumes of poetry, the most recent of which is *The Sword on the Table*, published by New Directions. VERA SANDOMIRSKY was born and reared in Russia, where she lived until 1929 when her family moved to Brussels. She left Brussels in 1940, six hours before the arrival of the Nazis. She is living at present in Detroit. EDITH FRANKLIN WYATT, the distinguished Chicago writer, has been a contributor to POETRY since its beginning, and served for many years on our advisory committee. Her several volumes include novels and collections of essays, and a book of poems, *The Wind in the Corn*.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ORIGINAL VERSE

*The Big Time*, by Alfred Hayes. Howell Soskin, N. Y. C.  
*Enrico Considers*, by John Russell Mc Carthy. Press of James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.  
*A Wreath for the Sea*, by Robert Fitzgerald. Arrow Editions.  
*Love Lyrics and Other Melic Lyrics*, by Godfrey Locker Lampson. Frederick Muller, Ltd., London (29 Great James St., WC1).





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- The Dictator and the Devil*, by Severance Johnston    Ecnareves Press,  
N Y C
- Future Harvest*, by Jacob Hauser    Pvt ptd (1226 2nd Ave, N Y C )
- Autumn Audit*, by Francis Hartman Markoe    Pvt ptd
- Sam*, by Francis Hartman Markoe    Pvt ptd
- Selected Poems*, by O J Schuster    Taylor's Stationery and Printing,  
3135 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, Va
- Give Joan a Sword*, by Sister M Thérèse    Macmillan
- Seeding Democracy*, by Marie Lorenzini    The Gillick Press, Berkeley,  
Calif
- Not Unto Caesar*, by Elizabeth Kuskulis    Pvt ptd (Seaside Ptg Co,  
101 W First St, Long Beach, Calif )
- The Stricken*, by Ida Clarice Gowan    William-Frederick Press, N Y C  
(313 W 35th St)
- Mr Common Man*, by Bruce Kapustka    Pvt ptd (Bruce and Stan Lee  
Kapustka, 5013 S Throop St, Chicago)
- The Upward Quest*, by Gardner L Green    Bruce Humphries, Boston
- The Bell and the Bugle*, by Thomas Tracy Bouvé    Bruce Humphries,  
Boston
- Of Little People*, by John Mc Aleley Boyd    Manthorne and Burack, Inc  
(30 Winchester St, Boston)
- I Shall Remember*, by Charles Lee Hurley    Dorrance, Philadelphia
- These Poets*, by Harry Hooton    Garry Lyle Pub Co, Cremorne, N S W,  
Australia
- My Dancing Slippers and Other Verse*, by Claton S Rice    Pvt ptd,  
Seattle
- So Little Done*, by Knox Munson    Bruce Humphries, Boston
- ANTHOLOGIES, PROSE AND TRANSLATION
- Garcia Lorca*, by Edwin Honig    New Directions, Norfolk, Conn
- Poor Richard's Anthology on Father and Son*, ed by Poor Richard of  
the nation's capital    Shaw Publishing Co (1311 G St, NW, Wash-  
ington, D C)
- In the Name of the Bee, The Significance of Emily Dickinson*, by Sister  
Mary James Power    Sheed and Ward
- Love Poems Old and New*, selected by Catherine Connell    Random House
- Twelve Echoes From France*, trans by Arthur Barker    Progressive Pub-  
lishing Society, Wellington, Australia
- Conference Poetry*    Fourth Annual Writers' Conference, Northwestern  
University, Evanston, Ill